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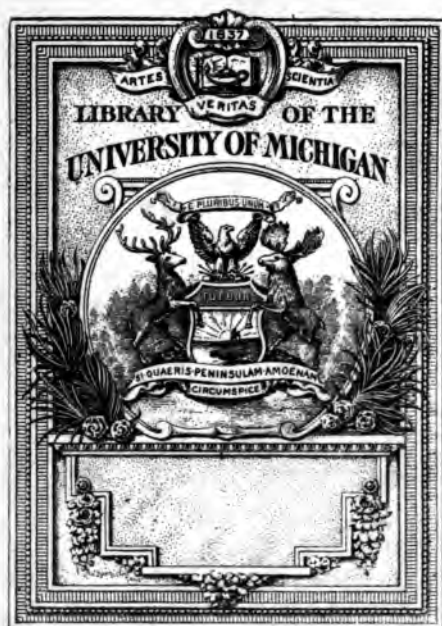
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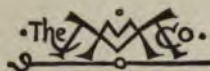
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**TRUE STORIES OF GREAT AMERICANS**

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**ROBERT E. LEE**



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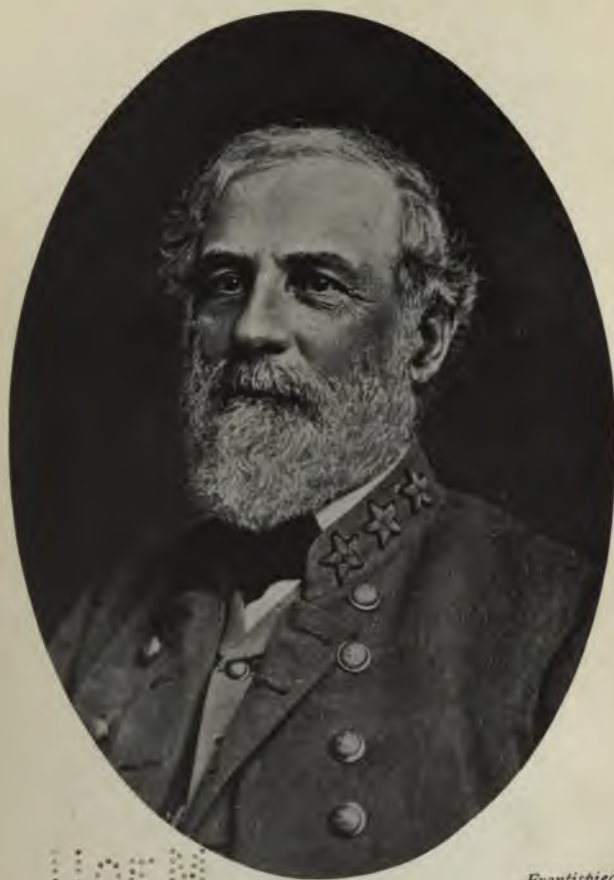
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*Frontispiece.*

# ROBERT E. LEE

BY

BRADLEY GILMAN

New York

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1915

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# ROBERT E. LEE

## CHAPTER I

### ROBERT LEE'S BOYHOOD

Not every young man of seventeen is strong enough to carry his mother about in his arms and yet suffer no harm from it. But young Robert Lee did it many a time: and his erect, well-knit frame bore the strain without the slightest ill-effects. His mother was an invalid; her husband, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lee, had fought in the American Revolution under General George Washington. He had been known as "Light Horse Harry," and his soldiers had formed "Lee's Legion," a command of mixed cavalry and infantry famous for their activity and daring.

But this distinguished friend of George Washington, after several years of illness, had died six years before; and his widow had devoted herself to the care of her children, five in number. Perhaps her grief over the death of her husband,

together with her anxiety about her little family, had impaired her health: at least we know that she became unable to move about unaided; and fortunate indeed she was in her stalwart young son, Robert, who made her his especial care.

Passers-by on Orinoco Street, Alexandria, Virginia, must have been tenderly interested when they saw Robert, hurrying home after school, — the Alexandria Academy, or perhaps Mr. Hallowell's school, next door, — bring out his mother in his arms, and place her carefully in the ancient yet comfortable old family coach.

The faithful young son was not only loving and tender in spirit, but in his physical frame he was distinctly attractive. A little above the average height of boys of his age, his abundant dark hair curled slightly; and his clear, frank, hazel eyes, which were set wide apart in his broad, high forehead, indicated that breadth of judgment which he afterward evinced as Commander-in-chief of the Confederate Army. His mouth was full and emotional; it hinted at that great human tenderness which won him such numbers of personal friends and such loyalty throughout his army. Yet, beneath expressive eyes and mouth, could be noted the firm jaw and resolute chin which suggested his indomitable will — that will by

which he always governed his own strong desires and passions, and, in his brilliant military career, overcame obstacles which would have defied most men.

The boy knew well how much his dear mother enjoyed those long drives in the ponderous old coach; indeed, that was about her only form of diversion. So Robert, greatly as he loved boyish sports, — and he easily excelled in them, — resolutely put them all aside, many a time, when they conflicted with these little journeyings with his invalid mother.

For her part she gratefully recognized the self-sacrificing spirit of her athletic, handsome son, as he insisted on being her escort; doubtless she gave him a goodly share of her "mother love," and probably she confided in him even more freely and fully than in her other children.

"Are you quite comfortable, mother?" he asked, regularly, after he had settled her among the cushions of the big coach. And when, sometimes, the damp, chill wind blew up from the river, he laughingly produced newspapers which he had brought, and, with his pocketknife, deftly made curtains to keep out the drafts of air that circulated freely through the cracks and crevices of the old-fashioned vehicle. It was his aim not

only to give his mother the benefit of the drive, but also to divert her from her household cares and bodily ailments.

"For you know, mother," he sometimes said, with a protective tenderness far beyond his years, "the drive will not benefit you as it ought, unless you take it in a cheerful mood."

In addition to this charming concern for his mother's welfare, Robert gradually assumed charge of the household affairs. His older sister was delicate in health, and for several years was absent from home, in Philadelphia, under the care of physicians; the younger sister was quite too immature for such responsibilities; and the older son, Carter, was at Cambridge; while the other brother, Sidney Smith Lee, was in the navy.

Therefore Robert carried the big bunch of keys, which, in Southern households as in English households, stood for authority and responsibility. Perhaps he did not care so much for the special indoor duties involved, although he performed them faithfully; but in the general directing of the estate he found a larger scope for his activities. And, too, the care of horses was a pleasure to him; he dearly loved all animals, and throughout his life he had deep sympathy for various family pets. When he became commander-in-chief of the army, he rode

habitually an iron-gray horse named "Traveler" who became almost as famous as his rider.

We are often told that "the child is father of the man"; in most cases this maxim holds true; in the case of young Robert Lee it was very true indeed. The wonderful union of strength and tenderness which characterized him even after he had become a great military leader was plainly indicated by his acts as a boy. That iron endurance of labors and privations which made his fellow soldiers marvel at him, in his arduous campaigns, was nurtured in him, as a lad, by his open-air life in Westmoreland County, Virginia. He himself has left the record that in his youth he dearly loved fox-hunting. There was much of this exciting sport in the Old Dominion; for Virginians had inherited from England many of the English customs about athletic pastimes. People to-day are perhaps not so much in sympathy with the rather cruel sport of fox-hunting; yet, a hundred years ago, the vigorous boy, Robert Lee, naturally caught the zeal of his older friends and relatives. Robert was rarely "in at the death" of the panting, exhausted victim; for he followed the well-mounted hunters on foot. He declared, long afterward, that he often ran several hours at a stretch. In this way his nerves and muscles stored up strength for later use.

It is one of the awful duties imposed on a great military commander to give orders to his men which he knows will result in suffering and death to many of them. A commander who has a tender heart issues such orders only as they are seen to be the one necessary path to victory. General McClellan, Commander of the Union Army of the Potomac early in the Civil War, was severely blamed for his "delays" and endless "preparations"; but his reluctance to order active campaigning was probably due, in some measure, to his tender-heartedness, and his dread of the slaughter which must follow such a command.

Other generals, like Napoleon Bonaparte, have never hesitated, from fear of bringing agony to countless faithful soldiers and anguish to untold numbers of homes; but they have acted from no higher motive than the gratification of their own greedy and cruel ambitions.

General Robert E. Lee was not as hesitating a man as McClellan, nor was he cruel or selfish like Bonaparte; he gave orders, many a time, which involved pain and sorrow for many human beings, but we know how he regretted so dire a necessity. This fact is testified to by men who stood beside him on bloody battlefields as well as by his own letters. So we find him, as a boy, gentle and con-

siderate of all who were associated with him. His mother exclaimed, when it was decided that he should leave home for the West Point Military Academy, "How can I live without Robert! He has been both a son and a daughter to me."

This was testimony from a loving mother's heart, regarding the constancy and delicacy of her son's ministrations to her, in her lonely widowhood. Especially since she had come with her little family to dwell in the city of Alexandria had she felt this growing dependence upon her son Robert. Probably earlier, in their country life at Stratford, these fine filial traits had begun to show themselves.

We must remember that Robert's earliest recollections were about that free out-of-door life in Westmoreland County, Virginia; there he had been born on the seventeenth day of January, 1807. Stratford House was erected on a bluff overlooking the Potomac River and had been the home of the Lee family for several generations. It was a spacious, dignified structure, built with wings forming the letter "H." Many important events had occurred in that mansion, and it always carried an air of old-time splendor. But Robert himself cared little about genealogy or "family trees," and rarely mentioned his ancestors, back of one generation. Probably this was due to the fact that he himself



was living an earnest, noble life; usually the members of a family who have achieved little themselves are most insistent on the eminence of their forbears. Again, living as near as he did to the great Washington, "Father of his Country," Robert Lee must have felt the influence of that high standard of human life.

He was but eleven years old when his father died, — that father who was able to tell his son many facts about Washington. For "Light Horse Harry," together with General Greene, had shared successes and failures alike with the great commander of the American Revolution. During Robert's boyhood, in Alexandria, we see him more distinctly than in his earlier days. He came under the instruction of two excellent men who could discern in him high promise of a noble manhood. The first of these was Mr. William B. Leary, of the Alexandria Academy, a man of character and education. He must have made a deep impression upon his remarkable pupil, for the two remained friends throughout their lives. More than forty years afterward, Mr. Leary, who had watched with profound interest the development of his former pupil, enjoyed an interview with him at Lexington, Virginia; and a second time, years afterward, when General Lee was returning from

Georgia, Mr. Leary made a long journey to meet again his former pupil of whom he had become so justly proud.

Not only was Robert's education progressing in branches like history, mathematics, and languages, but in moral and religious principles he received good tutelage; probably in his case, as with most young people, the deepest lessons that he learned were those that came from his mother's lips and life; but in the Episcopal school at Alexandria he received the usual training given by that church; and when we remind ourselves that, in later life, the world marveled as greatly at his heroic virtues as at his brilliant generalship, we are led to believe that the instruction imparted by the young rector, the Rev. William Meade, of Alexandria, was a determining factor in Robert's character.

Many years afterward, during the Civil War, this same clergyman — then the aged and infirm Bishop Meade — sent for his former pupil; and Robert E. Lee, a gray-haired veteran, hastened to his bedside. The meeting must have been a tender one for both men. The aged bishop, taking the distinguished officer's hand, exclaimed impulsively and affectionately, "God bless you, Robert! I can't call you 'General,' I have heard you recite your catechism too often for that!"

The choice of a vocation in life is always a serious step for a young man. But when the choice came to Robert Lee there seemed but one career for him to consider; it was that of a soldier. In his family might be numbered many soldiers of rank and distinction, and the young fellow had often heard discussed various points of military tactics and strategy. So he made his decision without hesitation, planning to go to West Point, then as now a great national military school. To prepare for the entrance examinations Robert entered the school of Mr. Benjamin Hallowell, at Alexandria. Mr. Hallowell was a member of the Society of Friends. Later, at the time of the Civil War, he was more in sympathy with the North than with the South, but he always spoke with the greatest admiration of the Confederate leader who had fitted under him for West Point.

The Alexandria school-building was reddish yellow in color, and the boys called it "Brimstone Castle"; but in it a lad could get an excellent education, and Robert Lee made the most of his opportunities. Many years afterward Mr. Hallowell wrote of his former pupil: "Robert E. Lee entered my school in Alexandria in the winter of 1824-25. He was a most exemplary scholar in every respect, and never behind time at his lessons. He never

failed in a single recitation; he was perfectly observant of all the rules and regulations of the institution. He was gentlemanly and respectful to all his teachers and fellow pupils. He imparted a neatness to everything he undertook. In studying conic sections he drew his diagrams on a slate; and, knowing though he did that the one he was drawing would soon be rubbed out to make room for another, he yet drew each diagram with as much accuracy, lettering and all, as if it was to be printed and engraved."

These are strong words of praise from an instructor who knew intimately this lad of seventeen, yet the painstaking qualities which Robert displayed in those early days were repeated in after life; for, thirty-five years later, General Lee worked out all the details in his campaigns with that same degree of thoroughness. His friend and fellow-soldier, General Longstreet, tells us that Lee gave absorbed attention to his maps and plans, sometimes calling for Longstreet and saying to him, "Do help me, please, to work out this problem! I have thought so long about it that my mind runs in a circle. Help me to find a tangent which will take me out of it!"

We know that Robert was an upright, manly, and honorable lad. We need not take literally his enthusiastic instructor's statement that he was

always "gentlemanly and respectful to his teacher *and fellow pupils*." Probably, in Robert's school days, as in those of most lads, there arose occasions when high words and even blows may have been given and taken. On this point we have few definite facts; but what we do know of the boy's noble nature and generous heart makes us feel sure that he never took advantage of smaller or weaker companions. And, after the excitement was over, he was always willing to forgive and forget.

## CHAPTER II

### ROBERT LEE'S YOUTH

IN the year 1825, when Robert was eighteen years old, he finished his preparatory studies and was ready to enter the West Point Military Academy. But for admission to that famous institution something more was needed by a young man than even the excellent training of Mr. Hallowell's preparatory school. There was need of a personal recommendation from some distinguished friend; and that recommendation Robert sought from no less a personage than General Andrew Jackson, who in 1829 became President of the United States. Robert's aunt, Mrs. Lewis, went with her nephew to Washington and presented him — we may be sure with pride and confidence — to General Jackson. When we recall the attractive, manly qualities of young Lee, it is not surprising that "Old Hickory" was much pleased with the applicant, and he readily gave the recommendation sought. If the rough old Indian fighter ever commended other young men, under similar circumstances,

we may feel sure that he never lent his influence to any who more fully justified his approving word afterward than did Robert E. Lee, born of the fighting stock of "Light Horse Harry" Lee.

Thus Robert came to the "parting of the ways." He had known great grief, in the death of his father. Now a different kind of sorrow came upon him. Not only did he feel depressed at the thought of leaving his beloved mother, but he was now mature enough to turn the situation about, and realize how sad the separation must be for her. Still, the eager spirit of youth sang in his heart; and he was powerfully drawn to the soldier life, and to those studies that would fit him for it.

He had dreams of the high service that he might render his country, and his knowledge of his father's distinguished military record was the soil in which those dreams rooted themselves. At length the parting from home was over. Farewells were said; promises to "write often" were lovingly interchanged; and Robert E. Lee became a cadet of West Point, with four years of hard study, yet with many happy hours of relaxation and recreation, stretching before him.

In the academy he met several young men who became his warm friends, remaining such all his life, even when conscience — equally imperative

in both cases — drove some into the Union armies and others into the armies of the Confederacy. Several of these cadet friends became Lee's aids and allies in the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Others, when they became leaders in the Union Army of the Potomac, playing that fierce, terrible game of war against him in dead earnest, Lee met and out-maneuvered by superior strategy which he based upon his knowledge of their characters as learned by him in the West Point days.

Together with the regular routine of his book studies went a goodly amount of rigorous drilling; and this brought the weaker students of the academy into erect, soldierly bearing. But Robert needed physical training far less than some of his classmates, as he was five feet eleven in height, — that perfect stature for all-around efficiency, — and stood easily, with squared shoulders, looking out fearlessly upon the world from clear, frank, brown eyes, set in a broad, intellectual forehead.

Many of his comrades kept within the rules of the Academy with difficulty; but Robert had already learned how to control himself, how to drive his impulses and appetites, like fiery steeds, by the bridle of his powerful will. Fitzhugh Lee, nephew of Robert E. Lee, graduated from West Point in



1856; and it is from him we learn most of what we know concerning his illustrious uncle's career as a cadet in that institution.

Most boys have felt a strong inclination, at some time, to be enrolled in a "military school," as many of the private schools in our country call themselves. Some of these institutions have little more of the military element than the wearing of uniforms and the display of martial titles; but at West Point, in the year 1825, as now, the actual life of a soldier was followed as closely as possible; there was a real obedience to severe discipline. For example, during certain favorable months of the year, Robert took part in genuine camp-life. Tents were pitched and all the routine of camp-life was maintained. He rose at dawn, helped put his tent in perfect order, then hastened to an early breakfast, and took active part in the soldierly duties of the day. A part of his duty was to act as sentinel; for the camp was surrounded by pickets, day and night, each cadet pacing back and forth at his post, through a portion of the twenty-four hours, as would be done in case of war.

One of the camp rules was that only during certain hours might a lad go outside the camp limits. If he stole out secretly, he must take his chances of being caught by a sentinel; and then there were

demerits or penalties imposed upon him. Of course there was a certain fascination in trying to steal, unseen, across the picket line, even when no definite gain came from it. The exciting risk of the act was a temptation to many; but, so far as is known, Robert was never guilty of such an infraction of rules — which was called “running the sentry post.”

One of the pranks of wild young students was the arranging of a dummy figure in his bed, and then slipping away for the night, taking a chance that the inspecting officer would mistake the dummy for the bed's proper occupant. Just how far our young cadet entered into those misdemeanors — for they were no less — is not certain. But he could not have committed many of them, for his record at West Point shows that he did not receive a single demerit during his four years' course. In addition, Robert Lee's record shows that he graduated second in a class of forty-six; and he could not have wasted much of his time and attain such high rank. Many of the students who entered with bright prospects failed to graduate; ten, sometimes twenty, per cent of them dropped out before the final examinations.

Not only in the classroom did young Lee take high rank, but of the various military honors

awarded to students he gained his full share; for at his graduation he held the highest honor which was at that time possible — adjutancy of the corps. In these days, when military tactics are more scientifically studied than they were in 1825–1829, cadets at West Point play what is called the “War Game.” In this game make-believe regiments and brigades are moved about upon large topographical maps, now attacking and now defending. This game is a great favorite at West Point and most instructive to a student of tactics and strategy. But it was not invented until 1870. In young Lee’s time the closest resemblance to a war game was chess, or perhaps checkers.

There must have been many temptations to wild conduct for such an active lad as Robert Lee. In a letter written to President Adams by Colonel Thayer, who was commandant, or superintendent, of West Point while Robert was there, that official stated that there was a great deal of dissipation among the students. But a strong, self-controlled fellow like Robert was not likely to yield up his self-respect and manhood at any point.

Later, when Robert E. Lee became commander of the Confederate army, he refused, on more than one occasion, to promote some officer, saying plainly, “He is a good, capable soldier; but I have learned

that he is addicted to the use of intoxicating drinks; and I will not put in control of others a man who cannot control himself."

All these sterner virtues of self-discipline and self-restraint we expect to find in a lad who afterward became so distinguished a military leader; we are not surprised at this. But we might expect to find so stern a warrior as Robert afterward became, lacking, in his youth, some of the tenderer qualities of human nature. If we had that fear, it would soon be allayed when we read of his conduct toward the Lee's family coachman, "Old Nat," a negro, who had been attacked by a disease of the lungs.

When Robert, then twenty-two years old, returned to Alexandria, he found "Old Nat," his boyhood friend, very ill. At once his heart was touched. A cold-hearted, selfish person might have said, "I am not in duty bound to care for this man; he has been paid full wages; let him look after himself." Some one else, with a kind heart but with less nobility, might have put a sum of money into the old man's hand and then dismissed the matter from his mind. Neither of these ways was taken by Robert. He gave not only money, he gave himself, his time, his sympathy, and his effort; he went with feeble "Old Nat" down into the state of Georgia, seeking a milder climate; and there

Robert employed good medical attendance and himself acted as nurse.

But the poor old man was hopelessly ill; he became weaker and weaker, and in a few months he died. Then his young master gave the worn-out body proper burial, and returned to his home in Alexandria to take up whatever duty should come next. Thus, in this noble American lad, we may see that blending of strength and tenderness which made him afterward an ideal of manhood to thousands the world over.

## CHAPTER III

### ROBERT E. LEE'S MARRIAGE

GRADUATES of West Point, as they go out into the world to put into practice the principles which they have been studying in theory, divide into four classes. A portion of them enter the infantry service; others go into the cavalry; still others into the artillery; and, last of all, some into the engineering corps. These last are usually among the best scholars of the academy; and, although there are exceptions scattered throughout these classes, a strong personal preference being sometimes exercised by the young man himself, yet the engineer corps usually stands highest in honor.

To this branch of the service Robert Lee was assigned, at the age of twenty-two. Then, as now, the duties of a military engineer were the construction of roads and bridges, the fortifying of harbors and seaports, the clearing of rivers which, because of sand bars, had become impassable, and other similar work requiring sound judgment and a preparation in mathematics and natural sciences. These quali-

fications were possessed by our young Virginian, now Lieutenant Robert E. Lee, of the Engineer Corps of the United States Army.

This branch of the army had certain advantages. Its members were not so likely to be sent out into frontier life, there to endure hardships and perils; to the infantry and cavalry, and in part to the artillery, fell these duties; but as members of the engineer corps usually lived in cities and towns they were able to enjoy the pleasures of cultivated society.

So it was with our young lieutenant. During the first four years of his professional life he was assigned to Fortress Monroe, and assisted in strengthening the defenses of Hampton Roads. His nearness to Washington and Arlington made it possible for him to follow up a friendship which had long been of interest to him, and which had, of late, become deeply romantic. It was his friendship for Miss Mary Custis, granddaughter of the wife of George Washington.

The young people had known each other nearly all their lives. During the latter part of Robert Lee's cadetship he had used at least a part of his furlough in visiting Mary Custis at her home in Arlington. She was a girl of great charm and exceptionally well educated. She had been proud,

many a time, when the handsome young cadet, arrayed in gray uniform with bullet-shaped buttons and gold lace, had put himself to a good deal of trouble to visit her. Between the two there was mutual attraction; and each seemed worthy of the other. Probably the "course of true love" did not run with entire smoothness; there is a tradition that Mary's father, George Washington Parke Custis, disapproved. Doubtless he thought that no man, not even the admirable son of "Light Horse Harry" Lee, was quite worthy of his daughter. But she did not agree with him; and Robert himself, although he may have felt, with Mary's father, that he was not worthy of this lovely girl, did not give up his courtship; and he at length won her promise to be his wife.

It is always difficult for young people, no matter how much they may esteem and care for each other, to bring their relatives and friends to see the beloved one with their own love-lighted eyes. But in the courtship of Robert Lee and Mary Custis we have the testimony of a near relative, which ought to have satisfied the loftiest demands of even Mary Custis, could she have seen it. In a letter, written long afterward, that relative says: "I was frequently with my aunt's family at Arlington. I remember hearing Robert spoken of as a young



man of great promise; his devotion to his mother was warmly commented on. The first time that I remember being struck by his manly beauty and attractiveness was during one of his returns from West Point, on furlough. I also remember being with him once at my grandfather Randolph's, at Fauquier. He was splendid-looking, and as full of fun — especially for teasing — as any of us."

Many years afterward one of General Robert E. Lee's own sons left on record that his father chaffed and teased certain people, — "but only those of whom he was particularly fond." Perhaps the "relative" whose letter is quoted belonged to that class. She says further: "The first time it struck me that Lieutenant Lee was really remarkable was during another of my visits to Arlington. Robert was reading; I looked up, and, as my glance fell upon his face, in perfect repose, the thought passed through my mind, 'you certainly look more like a great man, than any one I have ever seen.'"

After Robert was graduated from West Point, two years of happy courtship passed; but, absorbed as were the young lovers in each other, the earnest, ambitious young lieutenant of engineers did not neglect his professional duties. He applied himself with zeal to his work and gained a reputation for ability.



Courtesy of Dodd, Mead and Company.

THE LEE MANSION AT ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA.

Built by George Washington Parke Custis, adopted son of George Washington.

many officers of the army, and the costumes of the young girls were equally gorgeous. But as yet the clergyman, Mr. Keith, had not arrived. An atmosphere of uneasiness began to pervade the light-hearted group. "Where can he be?" "Are you sure he was properly notified?" "Perhaps the storm has detained him." For a heavy shower had come up.

Just as the uneasiness was deepening into real anxiety, and the best man, Sidney Smith Lee, had gone to the doorway for the third time to peer out along the rain-swept avenue, a covered carriage came rolling down the graveled roadway, drawn by a drooping, plodding horse.

The vehicle was indeed "covered," but imperfectly. Presently, as it drew up before the door, the Rev. Mr. Keith disentangled his long, angular form from the flapping leather curtains, and presented himself, soaked to the skin, but cheerful and reassuring. His drive in the pelting rain from the Episcopal Theological School in Alexandria, where he was a professor, had not been really exhilarating.

The pent-up anxiety of the guests found decorous expression in restrained laughter which became more open as the good-natured clergyman himself set them the example. So all laughed together and were glad it was no worse.

But stay ! How could Mr. Keith stand, in dripping clothes, to perform the ceremony ? He might imperil his health ; and his dripping garments might give an unpleasant dampness to the floor of the "right-hand drawing-room" of stately old Arlington. Who would come to the rescue ? Who could supply the clergyman with dry clothes ?

Who, indeed, but Mr. Custis, who had in the beginning, as the bride's father, so sternly opposed the match. Now that relenting parent bore Mr. Keith away to another room and fitted him out from head to foot with clothes that were at least dry and comfortable, but alas, were an exceedingly bad fit. For, while Mr. Custis was short and stout, the Rev. Mr. Keith was long and thin ; and he found coat-sleeves and trouser-legs a decided misfit. As for the coat's circumference, it was ample ; it even lapped over.

When the hospitable Mr. Custis surveyed his newly clad guest there was more laughter ; and all were at their wit's end, as to a remedy for the deficiencies. But Mr. Keith, calling for his port-manteau, ameliorated his own condition. He drew out his surplice and put it on ; and that garment straightway became like charity, for it covered a multitude of defects.

At length the two men returned to the company,

and then, with all proper dignity and solemnity, the marriage ceremony was performed. Afterward all sat down to an elaborate supper where fun and good fellowship were in order. The account of this wedding as here given portrays that interesting event from the inside, as the family saw it. All that the outside world knew of it they saw in the public notices, long after cited by General Fitzhugh Lee, nephew of Robert Lee, —

“Married, June 30th, 1831, at Arlington House, by the Rev. Mr. Keith, Lieutenant Robert E. Lee of the United States Corps of Engineers, and Mary A. R. Custis, only daughter of G. W. P. Custis, Esq.”

Thus auspiciously began Robert Lee's married life. The marriage brought him the control of his wife's large property; and she always declared that she was as much the gainer as he, for he managed her affairs so wisely that the property increased greatly in value. The real gain, however, was for the young people themselves, in the faithful affection that they gave each other. He was all tenderness and fidelity, while she was ever the soul of trust and devotion. Perhaps they felt that now they would have little more to ask of life. If such a feeling found a place in Robert E. Lee's heart, it was not for long. After his marriage, as before, his military profession opened invitingly before

him; and now he could share his aims and ambitions with one who made them her own, giving loving counsel in his perplexities and tender sympathy in his disappointments.

Perhaps they realized now, as never before, the grounds for Mr. Custis's opposition to their marriage; for the character of the young lieutenant's duties took him away from home much of the time. Mr. Custis had foreseen this; but now, as Mary's father noted the constancy of affection between the two, he felt his disapproval disappear. We know that, as he took his son-in-law into his beautiful old family mansion, at Arlington, he also took him into the good-will of his own heart.

## CHAPTER IV

### ONE OF THE WORLD'S WORKERS

AFTER the expiration of the short leave of absence which is allowed officers who marry, Lieutenant Lee returned to his duties as assistant engineer at Hampton Roads. There he gave all his skill and effort toward making the harbor fortifications as strong as possible. How little he realized that twenty-four years later he would give similar earnest study to the destruction of these defenses. But such was the singular and terrible turn of fortune's wheel; and many other reversals of progress there were, in that fierce Civil War of 1861-65, as we shall see in due time.

After four years of service at Fortress Monroe, Lee was appointed assistant to Chief Engineer Gratiot, of Washington. This change was agreeable to him and to his young wife, not only because it was a promotion, but because the distance between Arlington and Washington was short, and Lieutenant Lee could have more time with his family.

In fact, he could make the short journey on horseback ; and day after day he did this, starting from home in time to reach his office before nine, and leaving it soon after three, for the return trip. He rode a large, well-built horse of bay color ; and, no matter what the weather might be, he could be seen, every afternoon, on Pennsylvania Avenue, a handsome rider on a handsome steed. The exercise thus gained was not only a pleasure to the athletic young lieutenant, but also a factor in the vigor and endurance which he showed in the Civil War, under the enormous burden of his arduous tasks.

That we may not picture Robert Lee as a colorless, negative person, we have only to believe what has been left on record about his gayety and high spirits, by men of his acquaintance. Further than this, a single anecdote gives us a glimpse of that mirthful temper which marked his words and actions until the dreadful gloom of the Civil War settled over him. Yet even that did not wholly banish the smile from his face, or the witticism from his lips.

One afternoon, as the young lieutenant was setting out from Washington on horseback, he met his friend, Captain Macomb, walking. As the two men met there was some pleasant chaffing between them,



— perhaps about the rider's "seat" on horseback, or the horse's ability to carry his master. The lieutenant cut short the raillery by challenging, "Get up here with me, Captain! This horse can carry two as well as one!"

Probably the speaker did not expect the challenge to be accepted; but the mischievous captain took him at his word; and, in the same spirit of fun, responded, "I'll accept your offer. Bring your noble steed over to this horse-block and I'll be with you!"

"What! Can't you mount from the roadway? A good horseman, like you, ought to be able to do that."

"Is that the way you mounted?" came the captain's laughing retort. "Or did you use the block in front of your office?"

With a laugh Lee admitted the point raised, and drew up near the sidewalk. Immediately the active young captain — himself an excellent horseman — put his foot in the stirrup and swung himself on behind the lieutenant.

Thus with more chaffing and banter they rode on down the street, while passers-by stared at them in bewilderment. But just as the two young men reached the President's house, Lee discovered the Honorable Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the

Treasury, coming leisurely toward them on the sidewalk.

"Hush!" enjoined Lee, quickly, "here comes the Honorable Secretary; this isn't quite as fine a joke as I thought. Can't you slip off behind?" And he stifled a laugh as he spoke.

"I could, but I won't," replied Macomb. "He hasn't seen us yet. Can't you turn the animal around?"

"I could, but I won't," retorted Lee. "Never retreat in the face of an enemy, if you can help it! That's what we learned at West Point. I say, come on! We'll pull our longest faces and take what happens."

So both these young officers, with great gravity, returned the salute of the plainly astonished treasurer, and continued their way in perfect solemnity, not daring to relax until they were some distance from the spot. Then the laughter was heartier than ever, and there was even some pushing and pulling as the captain dismounted, while the intelligent Virginia horse tossed his head, trying to understand what all this boyish play was about.

Weeks and months passed; and in the summer of 1837 Lieutenant Lee was ordered to St. Louis to find some remedy for the sand-bars which had formed in the Mississippi River, in front of the city,

seriously impeding navigation. This meant a separation from the Arlington home; but in entering upon his profession Lee realized that he would be ordered about from one point to another, and he had hardened himself to accept bravely whatever separations were involved.

In those days traveling in the United States was far slower and more difficult than it is now. At that time no steam railroad had crossed the Alleghany Mountains; journeys by carriage or on horseback, or by rivers and canals, were the rule. Hotels and inns, if the traveler found any at all, were of a primitive character; while a journey west of the Atlantic States was beset with discomforts, even with perils.

To a robust young man like Robert Lee such hardships and dangers were only to be laughed at; he rejoiced in his youthful strength, and loved to test his powers of endurance. In June, 1837, when he was thirty years old, he set forth with Lieutenant Meigs for St. Louis and Des Moines. Leaving Washington, they went first by the Pennsylvania Canal to Pittsburg; there they took a small steamboat and sailed down to Louisville, stopping on the way at Cincinnati. At Louisville Lieutenant Lee gathered a company of river men, rough, fearless fellows who would fight an enemy or

risk their lives for a friend with equal readiness. Accompanied by these men, the two officers continued their journey and at length reached Des Moines Rapids, where they planned to begin work.

At once they saw the need of their efforts; for their small steamer soon ran aground on the rocks of the lower channel. All helped as well as they could; poles and sweeps supplemented the efforts of the wheezy little engine, but the boat stuck fast and there she remained for several days. The reefs and shallows and sand-bars were all about them. Not in the least disconcerted, the two young men directed the captain to keep his craft as she was, and whatever sounding or surveying was needed they would do from small boats.

So the steamer was made the base of operations and the men went out each morning in boats, returning to the little steamer every night. Thus in time the various barriers to navigation were charted, the depth of the channel was recorded, and the results of their examination were entered in their books, ready for use in the construction work which would follow.

Leaving the steamer still hopelessly aground, with her captain in a doleful frame of mind, the party now embarked on another steamer which had come down to them. On this they ascended

the river to the Rock Island Rapids. There they found another unfortunate little steamer stranded on the rocks, badly wrenched. Her hull was shattered, her lower deck was under water, and preparations had been made for taking out her engines. Not an agreeable lodging-house, but it served our party. Fortunately, the upper cabin and staterooms were above water; and in these Lieutenant Lee directed his men to settle themselves, while once more they made a stranded steamer the base for their surveying duties.

Not every hour of the long summer days was devoted to work, though we may be sure that the party faithfully made "long hours"; such leisure as they had was spent exploring the country along the shores of the Mississippi, together with swimming, fishing, and a little hunting. We are told that the big river abounded in catfish, pickerel, and many other varieties of fish; and the enthusiastic fishermen of the party kept the larder supplied with fresh food.

By the end of October the soundings and chartings were completed, and Lieutenant Lee ordered a return to the Des Moines Rapids. This was accomplished on one of the steamers which were resolutely but guardedly picking their way up and down the rock-strewn river. When they finally

reached Des Moines the scene had somewhat changed, for this was the place where the Chippewa Indians assembled, each autumn, to receive gifts from the agents in charge of their tribe. In consequence, the shores of the river were fairly lined with birch-bark canoes, while among the trees many wigwams could be seen.

The "red man" was not as degraded then as he has since become, so our surveying party greatly enjoyed the picturesque scene, finding much to admire in the splendid physiques and dignified bearing of the Chippewas. The autumn rains had now set in, far up in the highlands, among the streams which fed the mighty Mississippi, and the great river had already risen several feet; so our friends of the surveying party were able to get their stranded steamer off the rocks and ledges; and, after some repairs, she was able to carry them back to St. Louis.

Here the most difficult part of Lee's engineering work faced him, and he had need of all the training he had received at West Point and Fortress Monroe. On Lee's strong shoulders rested the real responsibility, for Lieutenant Meigs, although his fellow-officer and warm friend, was in a subordinate position. The country all about them was but half reclaimed from its former wilderness state; there were no large cities, only hastily built towns far

apart from one another ; while scattered along the river bank were a few log cabins of settlers, a few trading posts, and an occasional military fort.

While they much desired to have the sand-bars cleared away from their river front, the residents of St. Louis were not as considerate toward the young lieutenant as they might have been. Although Lee had been sent from Washington to render this service, they watched his going and coming ; they commented on his methods, and told one another that he was very slow. Many of them felt that they could instruct him as to things which they believed he ought to know. Their unfavorable criticisms grew bolder and bolder ; there was even talk of asking Washington authorities to recall Lee, as inefficient. Indeed, threats were uttered by many ; and it is reported that some of the more violent citizens actually got a cannon into position where they could fire upon the working party, but no shots were ever fired.

Such adverse comment might have disconcerted or frightened some men, but not Robert E. Lee. He knew what he knew ; his nerves were fine and strong ; he smiled back at their frowns and replied to their scornful demands with the calm, courteous request that if they would be patient the river would soon be navigable.

Lee's fellow-officer, Lieutenant Meigs, later General Meigs, has left a record of Lee's appearance at this time. He says: "Lee was in the full vigor of his youthful strength, with a noble and commanding presence, and an admirable, graceful, athletic figure. No one ever ventured to take a liberty with him. For, although kind and generous with his subordinates, admired by all women and respected by all men, he was also a model of a soldier and the beau ideal of a Christian man."

Such praise as this is generously unstinted, but authentic and just, without doubt. Probably the "noble and commanding presence" helped Lee to hold in check that rough, border community whose opposition might easily have turned to violence had opportunity arisen.

Lieutenant Lee's method of clearing the obstructed channel, after he had charted it and reported his results to Washington, was to remove some of the reefs and bowlders by blasting, and then to force the current of the river back into its original channel by driving piles and constructing cribs and wing-dams. Thus, through his knowledge of river currents, and the wash of river beds, he forced the river to do the work of clearing itself. The eddies produced by the piles and cribs caused deposits of sand between the dams, and gradually



filled in the shallower places, compelling the river to deepen and fill its former channel with navigable water.

Since those early days great changes from this condition have taken place at St. Louis, as the population has increased and the city has demanded a larger and larger use of the mighty river. But Lee, in 1837-40, accomplished what was asked of him, and navigation, ample for the small city's needs, was established.

The most direct knowledge we have of the details of his daily life — the lighter part of it — comes to us in a letter which he wrote at this period to a friend. A portion of this letter is here given. It helps to make us see the human and fun-loving side of Lee's nature; and it also gives us an interesting little picture of the primitive customs of those rough, frontier days.

MY DEAR LIEUTENANT: —

Upon my return I found your letter. It did me good to hear about the boys. I now contemplate you as one of the stars on General Scott's staff. We have been at Galena; while there we met General Brooke, and, besides the pleasure of seeing him again, we had much sport in fighting over again the battles of Old Point Comfort. But this was done most temperately, for the General has forsworn strong potations, and our refreshments consisted of soda-water and ice cream, delicacies which the General had not touched for

years; and four times a day we pay our respects to the fountain and the freezer.

R—— has been away at Dubuque, having spare time on his hands; he plunged into an excursion party going to the Falls of St. Anthony, as they came along in fine spirits, music playing and colors flying. Would you like to know how R—— was clothed? A little short-sleeved, short-vested brown linen coat, well acquainted with the wash-board and much too small for him; a faded blue calico shirt; domestic cloth pants; a pair of commodious brogans; and a hat, torn, broken, and discolored. Now hear him laugh, as he presents himself for a dance, arms akimbo, and you have him before you! Whom should he meet here but "Hole in the Day," his Indian friend, and his faithful "Red She" who showed him his old blanket which she had religiously wrapped herself in. But, on her examining his fingers, her good copper rings were not there. He complains bitterly of his present waste of life, looks thin and dispirited, and is acquainted with the cry of every child in Iowa. He is also well practised in pork-eating and promiscuous sleeping.

News has recently arrived that the Sioux have fallen upon a party of Chippewas, and taken one hundred and thirty scalps. "Hole in the Day," R's friend, had gone on in advance and so escaped. It is expected that the Chippewa chief, who is an able man, will take ample revenge; and this may cause more trouble.

B—— is well, at the Rapids, with the whole fleet; and I hope they are jerking out the rocks, fast.

Another letter: Lee again writes, from Louisville, to his wife, who was much in his thoughts, as

were the little children who had been added to the home life. Most of his home letters show his devotion to wife and children, and this affection made him love all little ones, while they, in turn, were always drawn to him.

LOUISVILLE, September 4th, 1840.

MY DEAR MARY:—

You do not know how much I have missed you and the children; to be alone, in a crowd, is very solitary. A few evenings ago, feeling lonely, I got a horse and took a ride. On returning, I saw a number of little girls, dressed in their white frocks, with their hair plaited and tied up in ribbons, running and chasing one another in all directions. I counted twenty-three, of nearly the same size. Then, as I drew up my horse to admire the spectacle, a man appeared at the door with the twenty-fourth in his arms.

"My friend," said I, "are all these your children?"

"Yes," he replied; "there are nine more in the house, and this is the youngest."

Upon further inquiry, however, I found that they were only temporarily his, and that they had been invited to a party at his house. He said that, as I came up, he had been admiring them; and that he wished for a million dollars, that the children might all be his in reality. I do not think the eldest exceeded seven or eight years. It was one of the prettiest sights I have seen in the West, and perhaps in my life.

## CHAPTER V

### IN THE MEXICAN WAR

THE work accomplished in the Mississippi Valley was of so high an order that it added to the reputation of the young lieutenant of engineers. He was promoted to a captaincy, and stationed at an important point, Fort Hamilton, in New York Harbor. It was now Captain Lee's duty to make as strong as possible the fortifications of that growing city.

And this he did. He brought to bear upon the problems of harbor defense all the learning he had gained during his distinguished career at West Point, and all the judgment he had acquired by his hard experience at St. Louis. As the artist, in the well-known story, "mixed his paints with brains," so Robert E. Lee always mixed his acts, even the most commonplace of them, with a strong sense of duty; and the result was, — a continuous record of excellence.

But more exciting days were at hand. Captain Lee was to make use of his skill on real fields of conflict. Difficulties had arisen between the United

States and Mexico. What is now the state of Texas had been part of Mexico. It had been settled by strong, determined men, who soon desired to become a part of the great republic of the New World; but the Mexican Government did not wish to lose so good a piece of territory. Then revolt followed, and warfare. Those were the days of fierce fighters, the days of Sam Houston and Colonel Bowie (inventor of the bowie knife) and the defense of the Alamo fortress. If this book were a history of Mexico or Texas, we might follow the exciting achievements of Colonel Frémont, General Phil Kearny, and General Zachary Taylor, "Old Rough and Ready," as he was affectionately called by his soldiers. Suffice it to say that events so shaped themselves that after General Taylor had won the battles of Palo Alto, Buena Vista, and others, in 1846-47, the officials at Washington decided to send General Winfield Scott, commander-in-chief of the national forces, to attack Mexico farther south, nearer the seat of government at Mexico City.

A landing was to be made at Vera Cruz, a seaport on the Gulf of Mexico, opposite the capital. Then would follow the advance across rough, hostile country, full of foes, and an attack on the one chief stronghold of the country. For such work as this

the skill of military engineers was essential; and General Scott gathered a notable list of young engineers about him; among these were McClellan, Beauregard, and Lee, all famous afterward in the Civil War.

It was at this time that our young captain (yet no longer young, for he was about forty years old) executed a scouting feat which rarely has been surpassed in war experiences. One day he heard General Wool express anxiety about the position and plans of the Mexican general, Santa Anna. "There is a rumor," said General Wool, "that he has collected an immense army, and with it has crossed the mountain range, being now not twenty miles away from us. It is very needful that we know just where he is, and what is his purpose."

Captain Lee was the only man of the group of officers who responded. Saluting, he asked, "Shall I reconnoiter, and report to you as soon as possible?"

His commanding officer answered promptly and gladly, "There is nothing I would like more, Captain Lee. But there is much danger between here and those mountain peaks." And he pointed with his gloved hand toward the southwest, where the sky line was lofty and mist-enshrouded.

"Yes, doubtless there is," replied Captain Lee, "but I'll take the risk. We should know, for a cer-

tainty, about that Mexican force. I must have some sort of a guide. Where are those two men that were under guard this forenoon?"

"They are a father and son," explained one of the officers, "and we thought, as we questioned them, that they knew this country very well."

"Those are the men for me," declared Lee. "Let's have a look at them." So he led the way to the guard quarters.

The two men were of the peon or laboring class, ignorant and hardy, but anxious for their own safety. Lee had a fair knowledge of Spanish, and he questioned them. "You are the father? And you are the son?"

"Yes, yes, sir," and they bowed respectfully. The son was about twenty and looked not only the stronger of the two, but the more intelligent.

"You know all the country around here?" asked Captain Lee.

"Yes, yes, sir," came the young man's reply.

"Can you guide me safely ten or fifteen miles in that direction?" and Lee waved his hand toward the misty mountain range.

"Yes, yes!" The young fellow spoke eagerly.

"Will you do that? And come back with me to this place?" asked the captain, with a searching glance from his keen brown eyes into the somewhat

shifty ones before him. The answer was again in the affirmative; and Captain Lee ordered, "Come with me! Have no fear!"

Then the older man threw his arms about his son's neck, and broke into lamentations. Upon this General Wool, who had been silently looking on, grimly nodded his head and smiled. "That's the thing," he said quietly. "They really are father and son. That helps us. Here! Officer of the guard!"

The sergeant, running up, saluted; and the general gave this order, in Spanish, looking sternly at the trembling peons. "Officer, keep this older man under close watch! His son ought to bring back Captain Lee by to-morrow night at the latest. If he does not bring him back, safe and sound, — shoot the father!" And the old general turned on his heel and departed.

That was the application of martial law to a serious problem; it was drastic treatment; but every officer present knew that it greatly increased the chances of Captain Lee's safe reconnoissance and return.

In half an hour the daring captain rode out of camp on a spirited horse of good Spanish strain; the guide, Manuelo, rode beside him on a mustang. A small force of cavalry followed to escort them as far as the picket-line, a mile outside the camp.



The captain had searched carefully the loose flapping garments of his guide and knew him to be wholly unarmed. In addition, he showed the Mexican his own pair of pistols; the two understood each other.

The journey was over a rough, wooded country, and by some error Captain Lee and his guide became separated from the escorting cavalry, and pushed on rapidly. Lee now ordered the young Mexican to ride a few yards in front of him, tapping upon the butt of one of his pistols while making the request. The guide, so far, seemed quite familiar with the region, and was apparently disposed to act in good faith.

Night was coming on, but there was a full moon; and, on the whole, this made the expedition safer than in open daylight. Captain Lee now discovered in the soft earth of the roadway the signs of heavy travel. He could distinguish tracks of mules and horses, likewise deep ruts made by wagons. He could not be certain that the wheel-tracks were made by artillery. General Wool had expected such to be found.

A more hasty and superficial scout than Lee would have decided that he had found evidence of the recent passage of a heavy force of soldiers. Our captain, however, was not of that sort. He

resolved not to turn back until he had actually seen the enemy's pickets. So, forward rode the two men, the guide growing more and more uneasy, suggesting over and over again that they venture no further. Still on they went, though more slowly, and finally they saw the camp-fires of what seemed a large body of men on a hillside directly in front of them. At this point they crossed a stream, and the Mexican begged his captor to turn back, saying that farther on Santa Anna was encamped with all his troops.

Still the fearless, resolute officer persisted; and, in his kindness of heart, he said to the guide: "You remain here, I go on. I come back, soon; one hour; you must not run away; remember, your father!" And he tapped his pistol significantly. Alert and determined, pressed on the American captain. That was Lee's way. Always to be "dead sure" of a thing, with as little guesswork as possible. Suddenly he saw, by the bright moonlight, what looked like the white tents of an encampment about a quarter of a mile ahead. Lee walked his horse, keeping in the shadows, expecting each moment to be challenged by a picket. Should such a challenge come, he had made up his mind to wheel and gallop, taking chances of being hit by a bullet.

Now came an utter surprise. As he drew near the white objects Lee saw that they were — not tents of the enemy, but sheep, a large flock of sheep, destined to furnish Santa Anna's men with meat. At the same moment he made out several small groups of men, evidently shepherds, who strolled about with no thought of danger. This was the "camp" for which he had been looking. Riding swiftly ahead, he questioned the shepherds and discovered that Santa Anna's army had not come across the mountain range.

With this definite information Lee now returned to his guide, whose fear for his father's life held him fixed to the spot; and they rode back together to General Wool's camp to report. There the two horsemen were received with joy, and by nobody with more joy (said Lee, whenever he recounted the adventure) than by the old Mexican father, who had feared the worst for his son.

Although he had traveled forty miles that night, the vigorous captain rested but three hours. Then he volunteered to lead a body of cavalry over the same route toward the mountains, stopping only at their base, where satisfactory information was gained as to the Mexican forces.

Not long after this adventure Captain Lee was summoned to assist General Scott in fortifying the

seaport of Vera Cruz. Busy as Lee was in those days, his thoughts turned repeatedly toward his loved ones at home; and, amid all the demands for his services, he found time to write many letters to the little family at Arlington. One letter, after expressing his affection for them, says: "We have not met with any serious resistance. There has been a great whetting of knives, sharpening of swords, and grinding of bayonets, ever since we reached the Rio Grande River, but the Mexicans who were guarding the passage retired on our approach."

Here is a portion of another letter written to his two boys, one of them nine years old, the other thirteen; it is dated December 2d, and naturally touches upon the subject of Christmas.

"... I hope that good Santa Claus will fill my Rob's stocking to-night, and that Mildred's, Agnes's, and Anna's will break down with good things. I do not know what he may have for you and Mary [another daughter], but if he only leaves you one half of all I wish, you will want for nothing. I have frequently thought, my dear boys, that if I had you here, one on each side of me, riding on ponies such as I could get for you, that I would be positively happy."

Evidently Captain Lee realized that his boys,

like himself, were very fond of horses. One of them had written his father about this matter, and Lee in reply sent this letter: "The Mexicans raise a large quantity of ponies, donkeys, and mules; and most of their corn and other produce is carried on the backs of these animals. The little donkeys will carry two hundred pounds on their backs, and the mules will carry three hundred, for long distances over the mountains. The ponies are raised for riding, costing from ten to fifty dollars, according to size and quality. I have three horses. 'Creole' is my favorite; she is a golden dun in color, active as a deer, and carries me easily over ditches and gullies. So far she has never hesitated at anything I have put her at."

Another letter to his wife tells her that he had planned to write to her on Christmas Day; but that, just after breakfast, orders were received to prepare for battle, intelligence having reached the commanding general that the enemy was coming. "The troops stood to their arms, and I lay on the grass, with my sorrel mare saddled, at my side, and my telescope directed at the pass in the mountains. The Mexicans, however, did not appear. Many regrets were expressed at Santa Anna's having spoiled our Christmas dinner, for which ample preparations had been made. The little

roasters remained tied to the tent-pins, wondering at their deferred fate, and the headless turkeys retained their plumage unscathed."

After this bit of playful writing Lee adds these tender words to the wife he loves: "We have had many happy Christmases together, you and I. This is the first time we have been separated, at this holy time, since our marriage. I hope it does not interfere with your happiness, surrounded as you are by father, mother, children, and dear friends. I therefore trust that you are well and happy, and that this is the last time I shall be absent from you, during my life. May God preserve and bless you till then, and forever after, is my constant prayer."

Such letters, as these — and there are many of them — show the warm, unselfish heart of our captain. In a letter written in the uttermost confidence and privacy to his brother, Sidney Smith Lee, a lieutenant in the navy, he says: "Your commendations of the conduct of our men during this war have filled me with pleasure. They justly deserve it. No danger is too great for them to seek, and no labor too great for them to undertake. . . . The great cause of our success lies in our leader, General Scott. His stout heart has held us up to our work; and his indomitable cour-

age has urged us forward, while some held back, and others croaked."

This was meant for his brother's eyes alone. General Scott, who had been blamed by some critics, never saw it; and quite from his own keen observation he recognized the rare capacity of Captain Lee, and mentioned him by name in several of his written reports, even urging that the Virginia captain was the one man best fitted to succeed him.

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## CHAPTER VI

### DESERVED PROMOTIONS

As General Fitzhugh Lee has expressed it, in his biography of his famous uncle, "Engineers are as necessary to an army as sails to a ship ; they locate lines of battle, select positions for the artillery, make reconnoissances, and, upon their reports, the movements of the army are based. They draw topographical maps, construct roads and bridges, and guide troops to the points which they have previously reconnoitered."

Thus it will be seen that General Scott's corps of engineers was extremely necessary for his success in a strange country like Mexico. Their work began at Vera Cruz ; Captain Lee was ordered to throw up such earthworks as were needed to protect a battery which was to be manned by the sailors of a certain man-of-war, using the sailors themselves for workmen. He obeyed these orders in his usual earnest and thorough fashion ; in person he directed the digging and urged the sailors on to the limit of their capacity. Soon there was grum-



bling in their ranks; occasionally Captain Lee was allowed to hear a little of it; one man muttered that he didn't "enlist in this war to dig in the dirt," while another remarked that he "didn't mind work, but he hated being under orders from a landlubber." Lee decided that he would pay no attention to these remarks, if he could help it. Finally the captain of the man-of-war himself came up to Lee and remonstrated.

"I don't think my boys like this kind of work," he began.

"That may be," was Lee's reply. "We all have to do some things which we don't like."

But the old sea captain was not to be shut off in that way. "I tell you," he continued, "my boys are mad clear through; they consider it an outrage to be made to dig in the dirt. Now — what would you do if they struck work — they might!"

Captain Lee drew himself up, not giving way an inch. "They are acting under orders from the commanding general," he answered, "exactly as I am. If they disobey those orders, I shall put them under arrest. And for such men there is always court-martial."

"You don't seem to understand," persisted the older officer, now somewhat uneasy. "They are good men, these boys of mine, and they are here to

fight. But they don't need any piles of dirt to hide behind. They only want to get at the Mexicans; and let me tell you, even if you do get these earthworks all set up, my boys won't stay behind them. They'll climb out, and have a fair stand-up fight, on the other side of them."

Nevertheless, the work went on; and the earthworks were finished. Just as the task was completed, the Mexicans opened fire on the Americans; and glad indeed were the grumbling sailor-boys to dive into the trenches, behind the works, and to lie low.

One of the officers who heard about this incident recalled it years later in the Civil War, when a hungry, ragged soldier, who had hastily dug a rifle pit for himself, lay behind it, as bullets whizzed a few feet over his head, calling out to a friend similarly placed, "Say, Bill, over there, I don't begrudge nary spoonful of dirt I put on this little bank."

The Vera Cruz incident was not wholly closed, for a week later the man-of-war captain, meeting Captain Lee, said to him in frank, sailor fashion, "Well, I reckon you were right about those earthworks. I suppose they did save a good many of my boys from being killed or wounded. But, you see, we don't have much use for dirt banks on ship-

board. What we want is clear decks and an open sea. The fact is, Captain,"—this in friendly confidence from the bluff old salt — "I don't like this land fighting; it isn't clean."

We who read about far-off campaigns and battles are in danger of forgetting their privations and horrors. Several times, in letters from Mexico, Lee alludes to these things, yet always with an evident desire to shield his family and friends from the pain of them, even by second-hand knowledge. During one of the assaults at Vera Cruz, Captain Lee stood near his sailor brother, Lieutenant Sidney Smith Lee. He writes as follows: "The first day this battery opened, Smith served one of the guns; I had placed the battery and was there to direct its fire. No matter where I turned, my eyes reverted to him; and I stood by his gun whenever I was not needed elsewhere. O, I felt awfully; and what would I have done had he been cut down before me! He preserved his usual cheerfulness and I could see his white teeth gleaming, through all the din and smoke. The shells thrown from our battery were constant and regular, beautiful in their flight, and destructive in their fall. It was horrible. My heart bled for the inhabitants. I heard from Smith to-day; he is quite well." Thus spoke, impulsively and frankly, the human side of the man.

As soon as a safe footing had been established at Vera Cruz, the plans of the campaign were clear in outline, but the engineer corps must fill in the details. Mexico City lay directly inland, one hundred miles away, seven thousand feet above the sea level of Vera Cruz. General Scott's duty was to get his army to that city with the smallest possible loss of American life. To the engineers again fell the task of reconnoitering and mapping out the safest route across those hills and densely wooded plains. The difficulties were very great, but the campaign had to be carried out.

And it was carried out, to the full. Step by step the American army advanced. One after another, within a period of a few months, in the year 1847, followed the battles of Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Churubusco, Molino del Rey and Chapultepec. And these were fought victoriously for the United States arms. Our dauntless Virginia captain was now no longer a captain; because of his bravery and skill he had been promoted three times, and he came out of the Mexican war a colonel.

That Lee had richly earned these promotions we have ample proof. Yet, brilliant and daring as were his exploits, he was wounded but once, and then only slightly. A few days of rest and care restored him to good health.

In one of his scouting trips Lee nearly lost his life. He was working his way entirely alone through a piece of thick woods, watching a company of Mexican soldiers slightly in advance of him. Something threw the Mexicans into a panic, and all scattered and ran. It was like the bursting of a shell. At one moment they were all together, as one unit. The next moment the group flew apart, and the Mexicans spread over considerable ground.

Our Virginian found himself in a desperate position. If discovered by one of them, he would have lost his life in a most summary manner. But he was not yet perceived. The woods were dense and the light dim. Our soldier-scout flung one swift, discerning glance about him. There, behind that thicket, bridging the narrow stream, lay a huge log.

Lee ran, on the instant, slipped behind the thicket, and lay down beneath the log, packing himself we may be sure into the smallest possible space. Luckily, the Mexicans' panic was of brief duration, and the men all came straggling back, looking distrustfully about them. Captain Lee, beneath the log, could hear two of the Mexicans near him. On they came, nearer and nearer, until they actually seated themselves on one end of the

big log under which he lay. Gathering all his forces of self-control he waited. It was as critical a moment as Robert E. Lee ever passed; one careless movement of his muscles, and the confederacy of "The Sixties" would have been without its great leader.

But not one movement did he make, and the talkative Mexicans had no suspicion of his presence; had their eyes lighted upon him, or their ears detected the slightest rustle — well, the alert American officer might have "got the drop on them," as the rough frontiersmen phrase it; but more likely he would have been shot, if not by one of them, by some of their comrades not far away.

Finally the two Mexicans arose and went their way; but the captain lay "frozen," as do the wild animals of the forest, making no effort to rise until many minutes had passed. Lee knew too well how some one of the enemy might have suspected his being near, might have seen him speeding to cover, and might now be lying in ambush, rifle ready, watching for any slightest sign.

At last he judged it safe to move; he did so with caution, and made his way back, with the utmost possible speed, inside the line of American pickets.

This was but one of Lee's many narrow escapes during the Mexican campaign. Many years after-

ward General Scott was testifying before a court of inquiry, and he made this statement; "In the Mexican campaign, Captain Robert E. Lee, of the Engineer Corps, accomplished the greatest feat of physical and moral daring which was performed, to the best of my knowledge, by any individual in our army."

What was that daring deed? Fortunately we have a record of it, in considerable detail.

General Scott's forces had become somewhat scattered, as the army came up toward Contreras; and it was necessary for him to communicate with them, and to find some direct route by which to join them. Between Scott's division and the main body lay what was called "La Pedregal," a stretch of country heaped with masses of volcanic rock, so difficult to cross that Santa Anna gave little attention to guarding it, saying that he did not believe even a goat could make its way across it. General Scott says in his report: "Seven of our officers had tried to get across this piece of lava-strewn country, unsuccessfully. Then Captain Lee, of the Engineers, volunteered to make the attempt. He made it, and at midnight he returned, bearing a message from the separated brigades, under General Smith."

Captain Lee not only succeeded in making the





ROBERT E. LEE.

From a daguerreotype taken at the close of the Mexican War.





journey across this wild, waste region, leaping from rock to rock, risking his life on his sure-footedness, but he returned over that rock-strewn area in almost complete darkness and wholly alone, with the risk of encountering enemies, or of slipping into one of the many chasms which beset his path.

General Scott called this the most daring feat of the war; he added it to the already long list of brilliant achievements which he generously loved to rehearse in connection with his gallant Virginia officer. Indeed, General Scott said plainly that the capture of Mexico City, on September 14th, 1847, was, in a considerable degree, due to the efforts of Colonel Robert E. Lee.

## CHAPTER VII

### IN COMMAND AT WEST POINT

AFTER the Mexican War was ended, Colonel Lee returned to his home in Arlington. We may be sure that the reunion of the family in the old Custis homestead was a very happy one. His son, Captain Robert E. Lee, Jr., has described the meeting, although at that time he was but a child of three or four, whom his father had not seen for more than two years. "Young Robert" narrates how he had been dressed in his best for the occasion, and, with the rest of the family, he eagerly awaited the arrival of the distinguished soldier. Young Robert tells us that he had a little friend staying with him, a child of about his own age. When Colonel Lee, in his round of greetings, came upon these two tiny individuals, he exclaimed eagerly, "Where is my little boy?" And, in the excitement of the moment, mistaking the children, he kissed the little playmate. In the soldier's mind the picture of his child had grown misty during his two years' absence, yet the child felt the mistake deeply. It was his first conscious

meeting with his father; but later the two, father and son, grew rapidly into knowledge and love of each other.

One of the important members of the family was "Spec," a black-and-tan dog; he, on this occasion, instantly recognized his master, begging for caresses which the colonel readily gave. Spec's mother had been rescued from the Narrows in New York Bay when Lee was at Fort Hamilton. She had probably fallen from some passing vessel and had been given up as lost. The mother-dog's name was "Dart," and she was long in the family of the Lees, paying for her keep by effectually clearing the stables of rats which had formerly infested them.

Spec, the impudent, fascinating offspring of Dart, was born at Fort Hamilton, and had soon become even more of a family pet than his mother had been. Colonel Lee, writing home during the campaigns, often sent special messages to Spec. Whether the little dog ever got these messages through his clever brain we cannot say, but he certainly knew his master when he returned. Young Robert tells us that his father would never allow Spec's ears and tail to be cropped, in the cruel fashion of those days.

"When Spec," writes Robert, Jr., "was fully

grown, he went with us everywhere; he even accompanied us to church. As his presence always distracted the attention of the little people in the congregation, my father determined to leave him at home. So, on the next Sunday morning, Spec was shut up in a room in the second story. Then the family, all relieved in mind, started on their walk to church. They were just about to enter the edifice when they heard joyful barks behind them; and turning, they saw Spec capering with joy, and confident that all would be glad to see him. For Spec had looked longingly out of the window and, finally, seeing that the family were not going to return for him, he had risked a jump to the ground, a distance of more than twenty feet, had landed safely, and soon caught up with the party. After that Spec was allowed to go with them regularly. My father was very fond of him and talked to him as if he were one of us." Later, when burdened with cares, Lee was sometimes thought by strangers to be reserved, even austere. But he was sympathetic, not only with his friends, but toward dogs and horses and cats, — even toward a tiny mouse which he had encouraged as a pet, while in camp in Mexico.

Colonel Lee's first appointment, on his return from Mexico, was in April, 1849, to the construction

of Fort Carroll on the Patapsco River, about eight miles from Baltimore. He continued at this work three years, during which his family lived in Baltimore, on Madison Street; he was greatly admired by every one, most of all by his own wife and children who knew him best. Robert Lee, Jr., has told us: "When my father went out in the evening, with my mother, we children were allowed to sit up and see them off. My father was always ready on time; but my mother often was a little late; and I remember well seeing my father, in full uniform, waiting for her; he would sometimes chide her, in a playful way, then with a bright smile he would bid us children 'good night,' and I would go to sleep with this beautiful picture in my mind, golden epaulets and all, — but chiefly the epaulets!"

On the first of September, 1852, Colonel Lee was appointed Superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point. This brought him back to familiar scenes. What nobler type of man can we imagine than this distinguished soldier, now forty-five years old, in the full vigor of his powers, mental and physical. His splendid record in his profession was well known to the cadets; and as they came in contact with him, day after day, he justified all the admiration they felt. He

was strict, yet he had those friendly human qualities which made the cadets trust and love him.

To illustrate this, we may recall a situation which Robert Lee, Jr. has narrated. "It was against the rules," he said, "for any cadet to pass beyond certain well-defined lines. Of course they did, sometimes, and, when caught outside those limits, they were punished by receiving so many demerits. My father, riding out with me one afternoon, came suddenly up with three cadets far beyond the limits set by regulations. They immediately leaped over a long wall on the farther side of the road and disappeared down a ravine. We rode on a minute or two in silence and then my father said to me, 'Did you know those young men? But no — if you do, don't say so. I wish boys would do what is right; it would be so much easier for all of us.'

"He knew he would have to report them, but not being certain who they were I suppose he hoped to give them the benefit of the doubt. I never heard him mention the matter again; but one of the three cadets asked me, the following day, if 'the Colonel' had recognized them; and I told him exactly what had occurred."

Of course such leniency won the hearts of the young men and helped to make them respond more willingly when he tightened the screws of military

discipline, — as he did, during his term of command, in several particulars.

Robert E. Lee, Jr., at this time was ten years old ; he relates that it was the custom of his father and mother to invite, every Saturday, a certain number of cadets to their house for supper. The ten-year-old boy, young as he was, could see how shy and easily embarrassed many of those raw young fellows became, on being ushered into the ease and elegance of the Lee home. He noticed, also, how tactful and kind his father was, quieting their uneasiness, and, by his own serene manner, gradually making them all greatly enjoy the occasion.

The professor of drawing and painting, at the Academy, could not help wishing that he might paint the portrait of so distinguished a man as the superintendent. Colonel Lee, however, never could bear to have his picture taken ; he could not assume that "pleasant expression" which is usually called for ; and he was even more reluctant about the portrait. Still, the professor was urgent, and at last a few sittings were given, though not enough to enable the professor to finish the painting, then and there. He was forced to complete his work as best he could by taking glimpses of the colonel, at odd times, as occasion offered.



## CHAPTER VIII

### COLONEL LEE'S INDIAN CAMPAIGN

THE action of the national government in conquering Mexico had resulted in adding considerable territory and many thousands of citizens to the area and population of the Great Republic of the Western World. New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California were now included in the United States, first as territories with a territorial form of government, and later, as states, with the proper forms of state government.

This increased territory needed military protection far more than did older portions of the country. For on its borders were many tribes of Indians, more or less hostile, who had repeatedly given trouble. In April, 1855, Colonel Lee was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel of the "Second Cavalry," a regiment recruited in Missouri, and intended to suppress the attacks of the Indians along the southwest frontier. Lee therefore resigned his position at West Point and accepted this new command.

It was an unwritten law in the army that if an officer declined a promotion he thereby confessed incapacity for that higher grade of service. But Colonel Lee was ready for his new duties; the confining routine of the Academy must have been irksome to a man of his vigor and independence; besides, he had been given full cavalry training in his youth and he was always extremely fond of horses. So he took his family back to the old home at Arlington, and then went first to Louisville, Kentucky, where he assumed command, and next to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, to gather and drill his recruits. He must have found some raw material, but he was the one man who could successfully get it into shape. Many of the new men lacked proper clothing and shoes, through no fault of their own. The supplies had not come; and, as they lined up on parade, they presented a grotesque sight. One particular man Lee referred to in a letter home. He was clad in dirty, tattered shirt and trousers, a soiled white hat, shoes that gaped wearily as from fatigue, and other garments to match.

"So you have come to join the regiment?" asked the lieutenant-colonel, pleasantly.

The man saluted awkwardly, and with a grin replied, "I reckon that's about it, Colonel."

"Are those the best clothes you've got?" continued Colonel Lee.

"They're my best, and they're *all* I've got," said the recruit, with perfect good nature.

"Yes, I understand. Still, you might wash them and mend them."

The man's grin widened. "Yer see, they're *all I've got*; and if I took 'em off, I wouldn't look just right, now, round here, would I?"

The fellow was facetious yet respectful. The colonel smiled, despite himself. He could not have such an untidy man in the ranks, yet it certainly would not do to have the man going about unclothed. He hesitated, then he said, pleasantly;

"Here, this is what you can do. Go down to the river, and wash everything you've got on. Then sit on the bank and watch the passing steamboats until your clothes have dried; before you put them on, you had better mend them. So take a needle and thread down with you." There was authority in the officer's voice, although he smiled as he spoke. And the untidy recruit took the order in good part, and, saluting, went away.

The next day, at inspection, there stood the man, grinning broadly and proudly, with his clothes clean, mended, and presentable. His toes stuck

through the shoes, but, on the whole, he was much improved. So, when his commanding officer complimented him, the two understood each other perfectly. Thenceforth this particular recruit was one of Lee's warmest admirers.

Later, Lee wrote to his wife from San Antonio, Texas, where his regiment had been ordered, "To-morrow we set out for Fort Mason; my bill of fare for the journey will be a boiled ham, hard bread, a bottle of molasses, and a bottle of coffee extract." Not luxurious living, truly; yet quite sufficient for the commander of a cavalry regiment going to fight Indians. He ordered a rapid advance, soon afterward, in pursuit of a roving band of Comanches who had suddenly descended upon a settlement, killing and scalping men, capturing women, and driving off horses and cattle. These Comanches were extremely fine horsemen and eager to fight if they held even a slight advantage in numbers or position. Usually, however, as in this case, after a raid on the settlers they broke up into small groups, and scattered in several directions, coming together again only after they had put a dozen or twenty miles between themselves and their pursuers.

In a letter to his wife in August, 1856, Lee says: "I hope you enjoyed your usual celebration of the

Fourth of July. Mine was spent, after a march of thirty miles along a branch of the river Brazos, under the shade of my blanket which I had spread on four sticks. The sun was fiery hot, the air like the blast of a furnace, and all the water brackish and unendurable. Still, my loyalty to my country and my faith in the future continue as ardent as ever."

Most of our knowledge of Lee's experiences during his Indian campaign comes from his own letters. Naturally, he was not inclined to set forth his own exploits. His letters, consequently, always turn upon some point in the home life at Arlington, as he thinks of it during those lonely nights and days upon the plains; or else some incident in his army life brings the life at Arlington more vividly to his mind. He speaks often of the horses and dogs and cats at his home, for no family could be fonder of pets than were the Lee family. The Custis branch of the family, too, was of the same mind. The father of Mrs. Lee was inordinately fond of cats; he had one especial pet, a big, yellow cat that he held in high esteem, and petted "within an inch of his life," which is doubtless the right and proper way to deal with pets.

Writing from Fort Brown, in 1857, Lee says to

his wife: "Tell your father that Mrs. Waite, wife of Colonel Waite, has a fine large cat, 'Jim Noaks,' which goes with her everywhere; he goes with her by day, sleeps with her at night, and in public conveyances she has him on a leash, carrying along a bottle of milk for his special use. I have been trying to persuade her to let me take him up to Camp Cooper. I have seen some fine cats in Brownsville, but no yellow ones. Dark brindle is the favorite color on the frontier. In my walk, the other evening, I met a Mexican with a wild kitten in his arms, enveloped in a blanket. The little creature was spotted all over, like a leopard. I tried to buy him, but the man said that he was already sold. Even if I had succeeded in purchasing him, I should have had to keep him chained; they are very savage, when grown up."

In a letter written a month later from Indianola to his youngest daughter, Lee, after some good advice to the child, has more to say about cats. "I must inform you," he says, "that Jim Noaks, Mrs. Waite's cat, is dead. He died of apoplexy; I foretold his end; coffee and cream for breakfast, poundcake for lunch, and turtle and oysters for dinner. Then came buttered toast for tea and Mexican rats — taken raw — for supper. He grew to be of enormous size, and ended in a spasm.

His beauty could not save him. I saw, in Antonio, a cat dressed up for company, with two holes bored in each ear, and in each were two bows of blue and pink ribbon. His round face, set in pink and blue, looked like a big owl in a full-blooming bush. Now be a good child, my dear, and think always of your devoted father. . . .”

In closing this chapter, it may be well to state that it was during this campaign, traveling over the bare Texas prairies, that Colonel Sibley invented the army tent which has since become so famous. He was caught in a bitterly cold “norther,” his wife and daughter being with him; for the sake of warmth he made a fire in his wall-tent, expecting that the smoke would go out through the opening in front. It did not do so. This led Colonel Sibley to experiment, the next day, and he constructed a tent of canvas shaped like an Indian tepee, or wigwam. The experiment was successful, the model an excellent one, and the “Sibley” tent took a permanent place in the equipment of United States soldiers.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE CAPTURE OF JOHN BROWN

THUS far in the life of Robert E. Lee — that is, up to the year 1859, when he was fifty-two years old — he had not passed through any of those experiences which afterward gave him world-wide fame. Thus far he had been simply a man of fine appearance, an exemplary husband and father, and an officer of distinction in the United States Army. There were other men who, but for subsequent events, would have been considered in substantially the same class. But his life divides itself into two parts; the first part closed with his Indian campaign on the frontier; and it all was creditable and honorable. The second part, which lifted him into a far higher class in American history, began with the invasion of Harper's Ferry, by John Brown, on Sunday afternoon, October 16th, 1859. This was the beginning, so far as Robert E. Lee was concerned, of the great strife which we call, sometimes, the "Civil War," and sometimes the "War of the Rebellion." This



episode at Harper's Ferry brought him for the first time into opposition with the movement which aimed at abolishing slavery in the United States.

At this time Lee did not assert himself for or against slavery, as an institution. As a Federal officer, he simply obeyed orders and, as always, performed his task effectively.

Lee had returned to Arlington to settle the estate of Mr. Custis, his father-in-law. While there a message came to him from the office of the Secretary of War, telling him that a certain man named "John Brown" had led seventeen other men, whites and blacks, into the town of Harper's Ferry with the avowed purpose of liberating the slaves in that region, and supplying them with weapons from the United States Armory in that town. The Secretary ordered Lee to go at once to the scene of this disturbance and seize all the men concerned in this unlawful exploit. A battalion of marines and a force of soldiers from Fortress Monroe were put under his command.

Lee responded promptly, made his preparations, collected his forces of men, and reached Harper's Ferry in less than thirty-six hours from the time he had been notified by the War Secretary. He reached there at midnight; but, dark though it was, he immediately set about an examination of

the grounds of the armory, posted pickets, and gathered from eyewitnesses as full information as he could concerning the events.

In Lieutenant-Colonel Lee's group of officers was Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart, afterwards General Stuart of the Confederate Army, called (from his initials) "Jeb" Stuart, a brilliant cavalry leader. Lee and Stuart consulted together, and Lee told Stuart that he had decided to bring matters to a head at early dawn; he was resolved to demand the surrender of "Captain Brown" with all his men; and if he refused, the engine-house of the armory, where the invaders had taken refuge, was to be charged by the marines with bayonets. If the men surrendered, they were to be handed over to the United States authorities. Lee wished to hand them over alive, and for this reason ordered the bayonet charge; for with bayonets more men would be taken alive than with bullets. And another reason why Lee ordered this bayonet attack was that several citizens of the town had been seized by the raiders, were held as hostages, and might be killed by the bullets.

Captain Brown had hoped that all the negro slaves of that region would rally around him, and start an insurrection against their masters. Unfortunately for him, his hopes were not fulfilled;

the negroes had been so long in bondage that their spirit of independence was weakened; and they were unequal to the opportunity that he gave them. Some writers have pictured the great danger, at this point, of a bloody revolt of negroes through the entire South, with a general slaughter of all white persons. But that statement is unsound. The negroes were incapable of such reprisals, both from their long domination by the white race, and because of the friendly relations between the two races.

It is said by at least one of Colonel Lee's biographers that when Brown was ordered to surrender he replied that he would not, and that if Lee ordered his soldiers to attack the armory the hostages within it would be killed. This biographer affirms that one of the hostages, Colonel Lewis Washington, called out to the attacking party, "Never mind us — fire!" Whereupon Lee, hearing these brave words, exclaimed, "The old revolutionary blood does tell."

This same writer, General A. L. Long, continues, "Before sending Lieutenant Stuart to hold this parley, Lee had devised a scheme of action which he would quickly put into effect should the insurgents refuse to surrender. Stuart, in case of a refusal, was to raise his arm, as a signal. At once

the marines were to rush the door of the engine-house, and so confuse the occupants by the suddenness of their attack as to save the lives of their prisoners. This scheme was successfully carried out; the marines forced the door, captured the building, and released the hostages."

It is quite likely that this report is correct; but Lee's own account, set down in his own ordinance book, is far briefer: "Waited until daylight as a number of citizens were held as hostages, and their lives threatened. Tuesday, at sunrise, with twelve marines, under Lieutenant Green, broke into the door of the engine-house, secured the insurgents, and rescued the prisoners unhurt. All the insurgents were killed or mortally wounded except John Brown, Aaron Stevens, Edwin Coppe, and Green Shield (colored)."

The raiders themselves had fired upon the marines with some effect; so that the citizens of Harper's Ferry, much incensed, would have lynched the survivors had not Lee and his men prevented it. This was Lee's part in the famous "John Brown Raid." The survivors were duly turned over to the proper civil authorities; and John Brown was tried, condemned, and hanged on December 2d, 1859, just six weeks after the raid had taken place.

His duty performed, Colonel Lee returned to Arlington. He had accomplished what his government had required of him, namely, to subdue the rebellion. However confident the government in Washington may have felt that the episode was terminated, many men and women in Northern states were fully awake to its significance. They saw in it an outward and visible sign of a widespread protest against slavery. When the news of John Brown's death was learned, Wendell Phillips declared, in a public address, "History will visit that river, the Potomac, more kindly because John Brown has gilded it with the eternal brightness of his glorious deed." And Ralph Waldo Emerson, a more temperate and impartial nature, affirmed, "The new saint will make the gallows glorious, like the cross."

Thus it may be seen that "John Brown's Raid" aroused bitterly opposed opinions throughout the country. His course of action was undoubtedly illegal and delusive; but the principle in John Brown's heart was a noble ideal of human rights.

In essence, this ideal regarding human freedom did not differ greatly from the ideals and wishes of Robert E. Lee and thousands of other men who fought later in the Confederate Army. Back of

the secession of the Southern States, two points were at issue. One was "State Rights," or "The right of any individual state to secede from the Union"; and the other — the more fundamental one and the one which pushed "State Rights" into the background — was human slavery.

Regarding the question of slavery, as we may see by some of his letters, Lee regretted it, even deplored it, but took no active steps against it; whereas John Brown took a violent, even illegal, step against it; while the movement of the civilized world was away from it.

One letter of Colonel Lee's, written three years before this raid, gives us his ideas on slavery. The important point to be noted is this, — that while Lee saw the evils of it, he was disinclined to break through the armor of Southern custom by taking any active and injudicious steps which might in the end prove of little service either to blacks or whites. In this letter just mentioned Lee writes as follows:

"... In this enlightened age, there are few, I believe, but will acknowledge that slavery as an institution is a moral and political evil in any country. It is useless to expatiate upon its disadvantages. I think it, however, a greater evil to the white race than to the black race. The

blacks are all immeasurably better off here than in Africa, morally, socially, physically. The painful discipline they are enduring is necessary for their instruction, as a race, and I hope will prepare them for better things." Farther on in the letter Lee wrote, "Their emancipation will sooner result from a mild and melting influence than from the storms and contests of fiery controversy."

Thus runs the letter written in 1856 by one of the ablest men this country has ever produced; a man who, through forty-five years of honorable living, had won a lofty place in the eyes of the world. To explain why such a man took the position he did is astonishingly simple. Robert E. Lee cast his sword into the scales with his native state, Virginia, from the sincerest and highest of motives. He believed he was right in his decision just as truly as many of the great Northern leaders believed that they were right in denouncing slavery. As we read the chapters following we shall see how deeply the great general felt about the increasingly bitter attitudes of both North and South. There were many other Southern men of integrity and intelligence who were gradually coming to feel that the right of a state to make its own laws was a right not to be questioned by a national government. Northern states might free

their slaves or not as they pleased ; but to insist on imposing the "Abolitionist" point of view upon Southern slaveholders was, in the eyes of the South, an injustice to which they would not lightly submit.



## CHAPTER X

### CROSSING THE RUBICON

THERE were many problems confronting the United States in the year 1860, but the problem of slavery bore more and more heavily upon the minds and hearts of the people. In former days slavery had existed in the Northern states of the Union, but had long ceased to exist there; men and women increasingly felt the injustice of it, and opposed it in various ways. This growing opposition to human servitude, and the determination to abolish it, were quickened by "John Brown's Raid," and especially by Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." That powerful book, which set forth, vividly, certain of the evils of slavery in the South, had been published in the *National Era*, at Washington, in the winter of 1851-52, and later was issued in book form.

In addition to these causes, many incidents occurred, pathetic and tragic, as slaves escaped from their masters and made their way North to

freedom. The question of returning them to their masters caused much friction; and the civil laws were sometimes broken in the name of what was believed to be the higher law of humanity.

The South continually complained that the North interfered with its interests; and as time went on the slave states became more and more vigorous in their protest against the North's interference. Thus the question of a state's right to secede, to separate itself from the Union, came rapidly to the front. North and South continued to grow apart. Denunciations of slavery increased in the North, particularly in New England, while a denunciation, equally fervent, of a government which insisted on "national sovereignty" raged in the South.

The tense situation now existing was plainly indicated in Congress, where senators and representatives drew more and more into two groups, a pro-slavery and an Abolition group. Newspapers of the two sections added fuel to the flame; and nowhere in the country was there more excitement than in Charleston, South Carolina. It was in that city on April 12th, 1861, that the first open attack upon the Union was made. Several states had already passed votes of secession in their legislatures, when Fort Sumter, a fort in Charleston

Harbor, flying the Stars and Stripes, was fired upon by a Confederate battery at Fort Johnson. Immediately North and South realized that this mighty problem of slavery was now to be settled by fire and sword, carnage on the battlefield, and anguish in stricken homes. Lee had feared such a bloody solution of this great question; he was now brought face to face with his own personal problem. What was he to do? On one side was his pledged word of support to the Federal government; on the other came the call of his beloved state, Virginia, "The Old Dominion." } No questions of personal and family loss or gain entered for a moment into Lee's thoughts as he debated the matter with himself. } As for the issue of slavery, Lee believed in slavery under favorable conditions; indeed, we can well see that it was from the most profound and sincere convictions that Robert E. Lee finally decided to cast in his lot with his native state.

On Friday, April 12th, 1861, Fort Sumter was fired upon; President Lincoln at once called for seventy-five thousand soldiers; and this demand was promptly supported by the governors of the Northern states; but several of the Southern states refused support, and, on April 17th, the "Ordinance of Secession" was passed by Virginia.

This situation brought Colonel Lee face to face with the most momentous decision of his life. Not only were his own fortunes and the welfare of his family involved, but, to a man of his high integrity, his anxiety to stand justified by his own conscience and in the sight of God, — this must have weighed upon him mightily.

In addition, we may attribute to his intelligent mind this further oppressive consideration, — that he must have realized, humbly yet clearly, that his decision for or against the Southern states meant life or death to thousands of brave men, and thus it resulted. All this Lee weighed, doubtless, in the solemn deliberations of his noble soul. Never a vain man, nor a lightly self-sufficient man, Robert E. Lee was always open to reasonable suggestions; and he held a conversation with Francis P. Blair, wherein he was offered practically the command of the United States Army. This offer was probably made with the approval of President Lincoln and Simon Cameron, Secretary of War. Lee's reply to Blair's offer was, "Although opposed to secession, and deprecating war, I cannot take part in an invasion of the Southern states."

From this interview, Colonel Lee went to his beloved commander and loyal friend, General

Winfield Scott, himself a Virginian, and therefore in a position similiar to Lee's. General Scott presented the Union side as fully as he could, and urged Lee to decide as he himself had decided, but without avail. Lee's reply to General Scott's appeal reveals the moral compulsion which ruled in his action. ("I am compelled to do as I do; I cannot consult my own feelings in the matter." It was a question of conscience.

Probably another factor in his decision was that of sentiment, of idealism, of loyalty, to his proud old state, a loyalty closer to him than that which he felt for the Union at large. After these two fateful interviews, Lee returned to his home at Arlington; and we have this record, from his wife, regarding the travail of this great man's soul, as he reached his decision. She says, "The night his letter of resignation was to be written, he asked to be left alone for a time; and he paced the chamber above, and was heard frequently to fall upon his knees and engage in prayer for divine guidance. At last he came down, collected and almost cheerful, and said, 'Well, Mary, the question is settled. Here is my letter of resignation, and a letter for General Scott.'"

This letter of resignation was brief, direct, manly, — the letter of a soldier:

## CROSSING THE RUBICON

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ARLINGTON, WASHINGTON CITY, P. O.

April 20th, 1861.

HONORABLE SIMON CAMERON, Secretary of War:

*Sir* — I have the honor to tender the resignation of my command as Colonel of the First Regiment of Cavalry.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

R. E. LEE,

Colonel First Cavalry.

This action was like the shield in the old folk-story: it had two sides; Lee's resignation from service in the army of the Union meant that he would accept whatever position was offered him in the new Confederacy. He had crossed a Rubicon as surely as Julius Cæsar crossed that little stream in Northern Italy. Henceforth he was to give his sword to Virginia, with all his heart and conscience. As he said in his letter to General Scott, "Save in the defense of my native state, I never desire again to draw my sword."

As soon as this decision became known, Lee was named by the governor to the Virginia Convention, sitting at Richmond, as Major-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Virginian troops. He was not put in command of the entire army of the Confederacy, but solely over Virginia soldiers. The Convention, having ratified the governor's plan,

and knowing Lee's distinguished record, rejoiced unspeakably because he was to stand with his state in its secession from the Union. Naturally, the delegates wished to see him, and he was invited to appear before the Convention.

Lee was never inclined toward vain shows or dramatic situations; he would have much preferred to avoid a public scene, and to give every moment of his time and every atom of his strength to the task of organizing the military force, now put under his orders; however, he yielded to the Convention's desire to see him, deeming it a justifiable desire. The hall, when Lee entered, was crowded. The audience was eager to see the man upon whom such heavy responsibilities were to rest; and all the members of the Convention rose to their feet as he entered.

When all was quiet the Chairman of the Convention, Mr. John Janney, gave an eloquent address of welcome in which he said, "Major-General Lee, in the name of our state, I bid you a heartfelt welcome to this hall where have been heard the voices of statesmen, soldiers, and sages of bygone days who have borne your name. When our need of a leader became apparent we turned instinctively to the old county of Westmoreland, so prolific, in the olden days, of heroes and statesmen. It

was she who gave birth to the 'Father of his Country,' to Richard Henry Lee, and, last but not least, to your own gallant father. We have watched with pride the triumphant march through Mexico of that army to which you were attached; we know what luster was shed on the American arms by that campaign; and we know, also — what your modesty has always disclaimed — that no small share of the glory of that achievement was due to your valor and your military genius. We have expressed, by our unanimous vote, our conviction that you are — among the living citizens of Virginia — 'first in war.' We pray God that ere long you may come to be known also as 'first in peace.' And when the due time comes, you will have earned that proud distinction of being, 'first in the hearts of your countrymen.'"

Mr. Janney's entire address was in the same eulogistic strain, overwhelming in its fervor, and almost oppressive to the modest, soldierly man standing before that enthusiastic assembly. When it was ended every ear was quickened to hear Major-General Lee's reply, and every eye was turned upon him. His response was brief, as we would expect; not one-quarter the length of Mr. Janney's eloquent address:

"Mr. President, and members of the Conven-



tion," he began, "deeply impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, and profoundly grateful for the honor conferred upon me, I accept the position to which your too kindly judgment has assigned me. Trusting to Almighty God, an approving conscience, and the aid of my fellow-citizens, I will devote myself to the defense and service of my native state, in whose behalf alone I would ever draw my sword."

This enthusiastic meeting was held on April 23d, 1861. In May, the Secretary of War of the Confederacy put General Lee in command of all Confederate troops, from any state, as soon as they entered Virginia.



## CHAPTER XI

### A WAR WITHIN A NATION

THE War of the Rebellion, the Great Civil War, lasted from the attack on Fort Sumter, on April 12th, 1861, to Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, April 9th, 1865, and Johnston's surrender to Sherman, on April 26th, 1865, — a period of almost exactly four years; and it was a war of especial horror because it was waged between two sections of one nation; it was a struggle to the death among the members of one great family. Combatants on both sides spoke the same language, cherished the same historic memories, and often were connected by ties of marriage and friendship, one group with the other.

When one nation enters the territory of another nation, there to do battle with men who are practically strangers, and who speak an alien tongue, the feeling of one side toward the other is unmitigated hatred and outrage. Such was the case in the war between our North and South. Sometimes one side is the aggressor, sometimes the other.

army, and one member to another; and wives sometimes blended tearful prayers for a Union son and a Confederate husband, knowing that even as they prayed the two loved ones might be grappling in bloody strife. War, even under its mildest aspects, is ferocious and heartrending, as Lee wrote from his Mexican campaign to his family at Arlington. But a war between two parts of one country, like our Civil War, means additional horrors and pangs which spring from lacerated affections, and homes rent asunder.

Yet the war went on. President Lincoln had called upon the North for 100,000 volunteers, and the North had responded with astonishing rapidity. General Lee was at Richmond, gathering and training the volunteers who poured in, all anxious to support the Confederacy. A large majority of these Southern soldiers believed that they were rallying simply to the defense of certain states which stood upon their rights as independent governments. On looking back upon this period from a distance of more than half a century, and seeing the situation in its broader and deeper meanings, we know that slavery was the foundation of the South's protest.

All through the Southern states the expectation prevailed that now, with the seat of the Confederacy

removed from Montgomery, Alabama, to Richmond, Virginia, and with Washington, the Union capital, less than a hundred miles away, the principal part of the conflict would take place upon that portion of the territory of Virginia which lay between these two centers; but, terribly as the Old Dominion suffered, the battle-swept area spread far beyond the bounds of any one state. And the expectation which was generally cherished, North and South, that the conflict would last only a few months, — this expectation, alas, was not fulfilled.

General Lee was one of the few leaders of the South who foresaw a protracted and desolating conflict. Consequently he prepared thoroughly for it. By the end of May, 1861, he had organized, equipped, and sent to the field, more than thirty thousand men; while various other regiments were in rapid preparation.

From the nature of things it was evident that the North would assume the aggressive; so Lee was not surprised at the speed of the North's enrollment, knowing also that both contending parties contained excellent fighting material. This fact was not grasped by the masses of the people, North and South, until after several fierce conflicts had taken place. At the outset enthusiastic

Northerners declared that one Union soldier could "lick three Rebs," at which the South succinctly announced that one Confederate could "lick three Yanks." Both sides, later, by repeated and bitter lessons, learned to revise such statements. Not only were the men of both North and South profoundly stirred by the opening of the war, but youth and even childhood shared in the widespread excitement. Young men who were below enlistment age (eighteen) often gave their ages higher than this, and thus were accepted for military service. In colleges and other institutions of learning throughout the entire country enthusiasm for one side or the other was at a high pitch. Foremost among such institutions in the South was the University of Virginia; and there one of General Lee's sons, Robert E. Lee, Jr., was a student. Of course the college boys went into military training at once; young Robert, Jr., was elected captain; but captains need uniforms and other articles to distinguish them from ordinary private soldiers. It is evident, from one of General Lee's letters to Mrs. Lee, that young Robert in his need had applied to his father. He writes:

"You know that Robert has been made Captain of Company A, of the University. He has written for a sword and sash, which I have not

yet been able to get him; I shall send him a sword of mine, but cannot procure him a sash."

After the work of organizing was well under way, at Richmond, there was a growing popular demand that General Lee should proceed to West Virginia, where the Union commander, General McClellan, had defeated Confederate troops, General Garnett having been killed in the battle. The famous battle of "Bull Run," as the North called it, while the South referred to it as the battle of Manassas, had been fought, with defeat for the Union army. In this conflict General Lee took no part; but his distinguished record in the Mexican war was well known. Therefore Governor Letcher and his military council, reluctant as they were to lose his assistance at Richmond, placed him in command of the Army of West Virginia. Here Lee began that wonderful military career which afterward made him famous throughout the world.

But at the beginning of his activity in the Civil War, Lee was destined to meet with disappointment. His campaigns in West Virginia were in large measure unsuccessful; the situation he found in that region was this: General McClellan had seized and fortified the approaches to Harper's Ferry, after the place itself had been captured. Then "Little Mac," as his soldiers affectionately

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called him, was ordered to return to Washington and General Rosecrans took command in West Virginia. Not the least important barrier to Lee's success here lay in the hostile — or at least unfriendly — attitude of the population of that mountainous country. The reason why they were so lukewarm in their support of the Confederacy is clearly explained by one of Lee's most admiring biographers. He says: "These dwellers in West Virginia were but little affected by the causes which led to the war, for several reasons. One was because of the absence of slaves among them."

But the campaign, among these peaks and spurs of West Virginia, dragged heavily from the first. Rosecrans was leading one body of Union troops up the Kanawha River, while Reynolds was intrenched with another body upon the Cheat River. The Confederate troops were in four detachments, commanded by four generals who had not worked together harmoniously. In July, 1861, General Lee took command and for a time gave attention to organizing the men into one army, a big, efficient body; and the difficulties of this task were very great. How great they were we learn from his letters written at that time; and we can see that "soldiering" is far from being the mere pastime we are tempted to think it, when we stand on the city

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sidewalks, watching the rhythmic tread of a passing company of soldiers, trim and gay in their immaculate uniforms, while the band at their head plays inspiring strains.

"The enemy has been driven back, not by a battle, but by a change of position. Rain, rain, rain, there has been nothing but rain. The state of the weather has aggravated the sickness that has attacked the whole army — measles and typhoid fever; some regiments have not over three hundred men fit for duty. Do not mention this. It will be in the papers. The dirt turnpikes, rich in mold, are so cut up that only double teams can travel."

On September 11th, General Lee wrote to his wife from Valley Mountain. His letter tells briefly and frankly of his failure to capture or drive back the Union forces. "I had hoped," he wrote, "to surprise the enemy's works, on the morning of the 12th, both at Cheat Mountain and at Valley River. All the attacking parties, with great labor, had reached their destinations over mountains considered impassable to bodies of troops, despite the heavy storm which had set in the day before and raged all night, in which they had to stand until daylight. Their arms were then wet, and they themselves in no fit condition for a fierce assault.



After waiting in vain, until after ten o'clock, for a signal which was to be given by our other attacking troops, we remained on the ground three days. But the enemy would not come out of his trenches and we have returned to this place. My regret at this untoward event was great. We met with one heavy loss which grieves me deeply. Colonel Washington accompanied our son Fitzhugh on a reconnoitering expedition; I fear they went too near the enemy's pickets. The first they knew there was a volley from a concealed party, within a few yards of them. Three balls passed through the Colonel's body and three struck our son's horse. He was able, however, to seize the Colonel's horse, and bring him and his wounded master away."

Still another letter, in much the same vein:

"The enemy has withdrawn. Your letter, with the socks, has come. As I found Perry" [his colored servant from Arlington] "in desperate need, I bestowed a couple of pairs upon him, as a present from you. There was a drenching rain, yesterday, and as I had left my overcoat in camp I was thoroughly wet, from head to foot. I have put my clothes on the bushes, and they will be well washed."

Thus the campaign in West Virginia dragged on, with no success for General Lee's forces. The

exact cause for the failure has never been clearly known, though frequently discussed and partly surmised. The President of the Confederacy, Mr. Jefferson Davis, has left a few words on record which hint at the causes. He says that after General Lee returned to Richmond he reported to Mr. Davis and gave him a detailed account of the West Virginia campaign. That report showed that, but for the failure of certain subordinate officers, Lee would have gained a victory; but the disappointed commander, with that nobility and generosity which he always showed both in failure and success, spoke these words to Mr. Davis; "I would rather rest under censure myself, than injure those who are doing what they can for the cause."

In the days of the Civil War each side suffered from disclosures of its plans by newspaper accounts. Armies and their officials had not then learned what the Japanese learned and practiced in their war with Russia — to keep the movements and positions and purposes of their troops, at the front, an entire secret.

But after our Civil War General Lee, who had been the master-mind of the Southern armies, declared that he was frequently enabled to oppose the enemy with advantage because of reading its

plans in Northern newspapers, which he regularly examined.

Editors of certain Charleston papers had encouraged the secession idea most persistently. All through the war many editors, both South and North, assumed a wisdom and authority which they by no means possessed. In one of General Lee's letters from Western Virginia he says, with grim humor, "General Floyd [Confederate] has three editors on his staff. I hope something will be done to please them."

In connection with the evil of newspaper interference, Benjamin F. Hill of Georgia has left us this incident concerning Robert E. Lee. Shortly after General Bragg ceased to command the Army of the Tennessee, Lee said, "We made a great mistake, Mr. Hill" (with a twinkle in his eye), "in the beginning of our struggle with the North."

"What mistake do you mean, General?" asked Mr. Hill.

"Why, sir, in the beginning, we appointed all our worst generals to command the armies, and all our best generals to edit the newspapers. As you know, I have planned a few battles and campaigns; sometimes my plans have defects; and when I've studied them afterwards I have wondered that I did not see those defects in advance. Then,

on reading some of our newspapers, I have discovered that their editors saw all the mistakes, plainly, from the start,—only they did not communicate their knowledge to me until it was too late.”

“Then,” continues Mr. Hill, “a grave and beautiful expression came over his face, as he added, reflectively and calmly, ‘I have no other ambition than to serve the Confederacy in any capacity to which the authorities assign me. If they wish’ (here the same humorous twinkle came again to his eye), ‘I am willing to yield my place to any one of those editorial generals, and I will do my best for the cause in a newspaper office.’”

## CHAPTER XII

### GENERAL LEE TAKES COMMAND

THE Union, or Federal, government was planning its lines of attack upon the Confederate, or Secession, government. This Union movement was the "offensive" or "aggressive," while the Confederates were expected to be content with a "defensive" campaign. General Lee completely upset such plans when he came into command; but for a time after the West Virginia failure he remained at Richmond, holding a position which was called "Military Adviser" to President Davis.

To the leaders at Richmond it soon became evident that the defenses along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, and even Florida, must be strengthened; they were too open to invasion by warcraft from the North. So, late in the year 1861, General Lee, who had always excelled in the duties of the Engineer Corps, went to Charleston, South Carolina, to attend to these needed coast defenses.

His work, as we well know, was always of the highest possible quality, and the effective resistance which certain of those ports afterward made

was due to Lee's constructive skill. From several points along the coast he wrote to his family. Some of these letters are preserved for our reading. Their interest lies chiefly in their entire freedom of expression. Already Lee was becoming transformed, outwardly, because of his years and his cares, into that dignified, almost austere, man whom his soldiers so revered. Yet underneath his reserved outward manner ran a warm, mirthful, human current of feeling. In a letter from Charleston, November 15th, to one of his daughters, he chaffs her about having taken seriously some joke of her brother Rob's.

"Do not mind what Rob says," Lee writes; "you know I have told you not to believe what the young men tell you." Next comes this line, so revealing even in its playful setting; "I have a beautiful white beard; it is much admired. At least, much remarked on." So the cares of his burdened life were telling on him. He was no longer the handsome young lieutenant of the Mexican War, but he was still of striking appearance. His dark eyes were as brilliant as ever, while his bodily movements were at a high level of vigor.

During his stay at Fernandina, Florida, he found time to visit Cumberland Island, and Dungeness, the family estate of the Greenes, descendants of Nathanael Greene of Revolutionary fame. It was

in the luxuriant garden of Dungeness that the body of General Lee's father, "Light Horse Harry" Lee, had been buried many years before. General Lee records that many of the Greene family had recently gone into the interior of Georgia, doubtless to some place which was less exposed in case of attack by Federal troops.

One of his sons, William H. F. Lee, was now married; and a letter which we have from Lee to his new daughter-in-law, Charlotte, of whom he was very fond, is interesting as containing a delicate thread of deference mingled with its badinage, which would not have quite fitted into a letter to his own children.

In part the letter runs as follows :

You have no occasion to inform me, you precious Chass [he often gave nicknames to people whom he loved and greatly trusted, but to few others], that you have not written to me for a long time. That I already knew, and *you* know that the letters I am obliged to write do not prevent my reading letters from you. My proposition to you was that you should accompany your mamma to Fayetteville, and not run off with her son to Fredericksburg. I am afraid the enemy will catch you; besides, there are too many young men there. I only want you to visit the old men, your grandpapa and papa. But what has got into your heads to cause you to cut off of them your hair? If you will weave some delicate fabrics for the soldiers of the family out of it

I will be content with the sacrifice. Or, if it is an expression of a penitential mood which has come over you young women I shall not complain. Poor little Annie! Some one told me that a widower had been making eyes at her, through his spectacles; perhaps she is preparing for caps. But you can tell her not to distress herself; her papa is not going to give her up in that way. I am however so glad that you are all together, that I am willing you should indulge yourselves in some extravagances, if they do not result in serious hurt, as they will afford a variety to the grave occupations of knitting, sewing, spinning, and weaving. You will have to get out the old wheels and looms, again, else I do not know where our poor Confederates will get clothes. I have plenty of old ones for the present, but how are they to be renewed? And that is the condition of many others. I would advise your grandpapa not to begin building at Broadneck until he sees whether the enemy can be driven from the land, as they have a special fondness for destroying residences when they can. Do not let them get that precious baby! he is so sweet that they would be sure to eat him. Kiss Fitzhugh for me! Likewise the baby. That is the sweetest Christmas gift I can send them. I send you some sweet violets; I hope they will retain their fragrance till you receive them. I have just gathered them for you. The sun has set and my eyes feel the relief, for they have had no rest this holy day. But my heart, with all its strength, stretches toward you and those with you, and hushes in silence its yearnings. God bless you, my daughter, your dear husband, and son! Give much love to your mamma, and may every blessing attend you all, prays

Your devoted father,  
R. E. LEE.



Few letters ever blended more charmingly the pleasantries of life and its deep somber realities, yet it was written in a few moments snatched from the duties of placing "floating batteries" and throwing up earthworks.

Quite another side of the writer's life is shown in a letter to one of his sons :

MY DEAR SON: —

I have received your letter, and I am glad that you have returned safely from the Rappahannock. The victories of the enemy increase, and demand more activity on our part. He seems to be working his way to the Savannah River, through the creeks and marshes, and his shells now stop navigation. His barges and advance boats are even clad with iron, so that our rifle-balls are harmless. The tide rises seven and eight feet; so it is easy for them to propel their light-draft boats over the marshes. We must be ready to sacrifice all for the country.

Your devoted father,  
R. E. LEE.

Whatever the issue was to be, it was unknown to the untiring worker on the Georgia coast. And it was equally unknown to the anxious leaders in Richmond. The North had begun to pour out its thousands of brave men, and, in some parts of the South, these troops had been met and defeated by the Confederates, who were equally brave. Yet the Federal troops were not without their victories,

also. Forts Henry and Donelson, in the West, had been taken by them; likewise New Orleans and Roanoke Island had surrendered. After the first battle of Manassas, or Bull Run, July 21st, 1861, the Confederate forces had felt that their victory was a clear indication of their ultimate success in the entire war. So they were for a time rather lax in their efforts. Consequently, in May, Virginia became anxious; for General McClellan, with over a hundred thousand men, was working his way slowly but surely up from the Atlantic sea-coast, at Fortress Monroe, along the peninsula formed by the York and James rivers, leading directly toward Richmond, the heart of the Confederacy.

The Federal navy was assisting the army in its advance on Richmond. On May 15th, 1862, several Federal ironclads made an attack on Drewry's Bluff, nine miles distant from Richmond, on the James River; but this place was held against them. The battle was witnessed by President Jefferson Davis and by General Lee, whom Davis had recalled to Richmond.

Lee had already been appointed General of the Army of Virginia, and faithfulness to his own state was his first consideration; but the war area had broadened. So he now accepted an ap-

pointment as one of five commanding generals of the Confederacy. Not yet had Lee entered upon that brilliant career which later made him world-famous. It opened to him in this way. On May 31st, 1862, both President Davis and General Lee were on the field at the battle of Fair Oaks, or Seven Pines as it is sometimes called. It was so near Richmond that they could easily ride out and observe it. General Joseph E. Johnston was wounded on this occasion; he was hit first in the shoulder by a musket ball, and a few moments later in the breast by a fragment of a shell. The blow toppled him from his horse, and he was borne from the field in an ambulance.

President Davis had long cherished a warm admiration for Lee, and had held a higher estimate of his abilities than the West Virginia campaign had been thought by newspaper oracles, to warrant. Indeed, throughout all the war, Davis and Lee acted with equal friendliness and understanding. This could scarcely be said of some of Davis's relations with his other generals.

The Confederate President at once made Lee the successor of Johnston; and the new commanding officer began promptly that wonderful leadership which to-day ranks him as one of the great military heroes of history.

Whatever campaigns were being pushed in other parts of the South and West, Lee's task now was to save the capital of the Confederacy, less than six miles behind him. Its foes were massed in front of him and far outnumbered Lee's own troops. The secret of Lee's wonderful generalship, in the battles before Richmond, lay in this: he changed the Confederate plan of fighting from the "defensive" to the "offensive"; he also caught the enemy in scattered formation and threw a large force, like a "wedge" in a football game, upon a weak point in their line. Then he made a pretense of advancing upon Washington, which led the Army of the Potomac to retreat from its threatening position near Richmond, and threw Washington and the entire North into a temporary panic. It was one of Napoleon Bonaparte's war axioms not to send out a battle-line made up of even strength throughout against the enemy's lines, but to mass a large number of troops against some weak spot in the opponent's defenses, to break through, and then to repeat the same tactics at other points. Great as were the moral defects of Napoleon, he was a military genius; and Robert E. Lee had studied his campaigns as he had also studied those of Frederick the Great, Wellington, and other famous generals. Doubtless he had learned from all of

them. By none of them was he surpassed in his masterly strategy at several points in the Civil War.

At this time, before Richmond, in June, 1862, he made one of his brilliant strokes of strategy. General McClellan had moved steadily on toward Richmond, despite a few attempts to check him; he was intrenched upon the banks of the Chickahominy River. Lee had restored some degree of confidence to the Confederate troops by directing them to throw up earthworks with which to protect themselves. The number of his soldiers was about 85,000, as against McClellan's force of 110,000. Evidently a direct or frontal attack on the Federals would result in disaster for the Southern forces, for both armies were equally brave. So Lee resorted to strategy; he sent word to Stonewall Jackson, fifty miles north of him, to be ready to come promptly when ordered. He also made a show of sending two brigades northward, to strengthen Jackson, as if he himself had more than enough troops to overcome McClellan.

That act made the Union general extremely nervous, as he usually estimated an opposing Confederate force at fifty per cent more than its real size. Along the James River McClellan had used balloons to spy out the size and position of the Confederates;

but along the banks of the Chickahominy the country was so densely wooded that balloons were of little value.

Accordingly, McClellan had no correct idea of the number of Lee's men. Lee then summoned that dashing young cavalryman, "Jeb" Stuart, who had assisted him in the capture of "Old John Brown," and asked him to scout around the right wing of the enemy, and find out his strength. Stuart's response to this request was one of the most daring cavalry raids ever recorded. With 1200 men he set out, circled the Federal right, attacked and scattered several bodies of cavalry that tried to stop him, and made his way to the rear of the Federal army, thus learning exactly its size and strength. Then, as the enemy were now aroused along the track he had just passed over, he boldly continued his headlong ride, circled the Federal left wing, and came victoriously into camp, having lost but one man from his entire troop, and after being in the saddle more than forty hours. Jeb Stuart was now prepared to give Lee full and exact information. At one point in this daring raid, which astonished North and South and nearly paralyzed McClellan, Stuart had found his force confronted by a swollen river, the bridge having been carried away. Near by stood a barn. The

resourceful leader promptly directed that this structure be torn down and a bridge built from its materials. This was done, and the marvelous raid was triumphantly completed.

General Lee now knew the size of his opponent's army, and he knew, from his acquaintance with McClellan's character, that the Federal leader had overestimated the Confederate strength. Immediately Lee sent word to Jackson to attack from the North; and, leaving 25,000 of his troops on the Richmond bank of the Chickahominy, to engage McClellan's center and left wing, with his remaining 60,000 he crossed the river and attacked the Federal right wing.

It was daring strategy, indeed, to leave only 25,000 men between the Union army and Richmond; still, Lee knew that McClellan would imagine the number to be twice as large; therefore Lee's very boldness in crossing to the northern side of the river carried alarm to the Northern troops. Naturally, the result was a victory for the Confederates, even without the aid of Jackson, who, exhausted by recent overwork, failed to co-operate promptly with his commanding officer.

In most great battles, each general constantly keeps in mind the possibility of "turning his enemy's flank." Usually the "center" is more



difficult to penetrate; but the wings, or ends, of the battle line often may be encircled or "turned," which opens them to a rear attack or a side attack.

It must not be supposed that this masterly repulse of the Federal army before Richmond was accomplished by General Robert E. Lee alone; he was ably supported by splendid soldiers, such as Stonewall Jackson, A. P. Hill, D. H. Hill, Longstreet, Magruder, Stuart, and others. Nevertheless, Lee's heart and will were in control. He carried all the enormous responsibility. Indeed, President Davis sent word to him from Richmond, "If it were anybody but you who had planned such a daring attack, I would countermand it." But the Confederate President trusted his general, and his trust was justified.

For seven days, after this bold attack opened, the Federals retreated slowly and in good order, while the Confederates followed, giving them battle at one point after another. Finally, McClellan brought his men, sadly lessened in numbers, and much disheartened by their defeats, into safety, under the protection of fortifications at Harrison's Landing. McClellan's expedition against the stronghold of the Confederacy had failed utterly; he could organize the Army of the Potomac, but he could not outgeneral the Confederate leader



against whom he fought. He stated to President Lincoln that he believed the enemy numbered as many as 200,000 men. When the facts of the "Peninsular Campaign" became known, anxious President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton saw that some other man must be put in McClellan's position.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LEE AND HIS WAR HORSE

ALTHOUGH McClellan had retreated from the vicinity of Richmond, and the anxiety of that city was somewhat relieved, yet he had intrenched himself at Harrison's Landing, not fifty miles away; and Lee, at Richmond, decided to find some means of sending him back to Washington.

What the brilliant Confederate strategist planned was this; he would run the risk of leaving only 20,000 men to guard Richmond, and, with the remainder of his forces coöperating with Jackson farther north, he would carry the war into Maryland, thus threatening Washington. This "aggressive" or "offensive" campaign Lee began at once.

His opponents now were General Irvin McDowell, who was at Fredericksburg, and General John Pope, who had boastingly declared that he had never seen anything but the backs of his enemies, and dated his letters sensationally from, "Headquarters in the Saddle."

General Lee never gave minute directions to his generals, Stuart, Jackson, Longstreet, and Johnston, but always left them some freedom of choice as to their movements; so he was not surprised when Jackson, on August 9th, 1862, struck at that corps of Pope's army which was under the command of General N. P. Banks, at Cedar Run, and scattered it. Jackson was famous for the speed with which he moved. He defeated Banks, and retired to Gordonsville, without giving Pope time to attack with his whole army.

News of Banks's defeat greatly disturbed the Federal government at Washington; and, fearing that Lee might move swiftly upon that city, they summoned McClellan to its protection, quite as Lee had planned; so that Richmond was greatly relieved by the departure of the Union forces from the peninsula.

By the capture of Stuart's adjutant-general bearing a letter from Lee to Stuart, the Confederate plans became known to Pope and he hastily retreated. Stuart, disappointed by this movement of his foe, felt somewhat compensated soon after by capturing, in a night attack, Pope's headquarters at Catlett's Station, where he found important papers.

General Lee was amazed at Pope's escape, for he had planned to give him an overwhelming defeat.



THE ROBERT E. LEE MONUMENT, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.  
Unveiled in May, 1890. Designed by Antonio Mercie, of Paris.



Now that the Union forces had the Rappahannock, swollen by rains, to protect them, he needed to plan some other attack. After waiting five days for the river to subside, he executed one of the pieces of strategy which made him so famous. To understand it, we must recall that "flanking" an enemy's line of battle means striking him where he cannot so easily defend himself as on the front. Lee used half his force, led by Longstreet, to hold Pope's attention in front, and then ordered Jackson and some of Stuart's cavalry to proceed by Thoroughfare Gap to the rear of Pope's army. Jackson, whose movements were so quick that his soldiers (infantry) were jokingly called "Foot Cavalry," was as rapid as usual in his advance. Fitzhugh Lee tells us that the men were supplied, on starting, with cooked rations for three days; but, after the first few hours of marching, most of their rations were thrown away, as the men preferred the green corn from the August crops in the fields all about them. They flavored these ears of corn by rubbing their meat rations upon them; and they ended their meals with fruit and vegetables from the gardens along the way. Pope found himself hemmed in, and not being certain of the size of the encompassing Confederate forces, changed his base to Manassas Junction. After considerable maneuvering

and several short encounters the two armies joined in battle, and fought through two days, August 29th and 30th, 1862.

General A. L. Long gives us an account of a narrow escape of Lee's, which occurred just before the second battle of Manassas; it was the only time, so far as we know, when the great Confederate leader was in actual danger of capture. The story is told that a Mrs. Marshall, a hospitable woman and a friend of the Confederacy, invited Generals Lee and Longstreet to take supper with her and to remain under her roof overnight. This was an agreeable invitation to the fatigued officers, who had spent most of their nights in tents, and had eaten the plainest of soldier fare from rusty tin plates. The visit with Mrs. Marshall was to end at breakfast, early the next morning. So, at that time, having eaten and taken leave of their hostess, the two officers set out on horseback. Longstreet went in one direction, while Lee with his staff rode on over the turnpike toward Salem. Suddenly a quartermaster, who had been riding well ahead of the group, came galloping back, crying, "The Federals are coming!" And at that moment a Federal squadron appeared in the distance, riding briskly toward them. The situation was one of great peril, not only to Lee himself, but to the

whole South, of which he was practically the foremost man. But his staff, about twelve men in all, were equal to the occasion. They formed in line, promptly, across the highway, facing the oncoming soldiers. At the same time they begged Lee to retreat; they expected an attack, and believed that their best service to their commander lay in checking, for a time, the onslaught of the Union force. To their amazement, however, the enemy halted, and, after a moment's hasty consultation, turned and rode away. They had inferred, from the bold front shown by the Confederates, that a large force was close behind them, and that a trap was laid. Thus narrowly did Lee escape capture. Had he been made a prisoner at this time the loss to the South would have been tremendous.

On that same day, probably the 26th of August, 1862, another little incident occurred which shows us the great Southern leader on his human and friendly side. A certain woman of wealth and social position, living near Salem, greatly desired to see the famous General Lee. Accordingly, she and her daughter, in a carriage drawn by a pair of superb horses, drove out to a point where Lee was likely to pass. She encountered, on the road, this same squadron of Federal cavalry which had so nearly captured General Lee; and they



promptly took possession of her horses, leaving the disconsolate lady and her daughter sitting in their "horseless carriage" in the middle of the highway. Soon afterward Lee arrived at that spot, inquired about their singular position, and, in his charming and courtly way, gave them all the sympathy he could. The mother afterward loved to tell this story of her interview with him, always ending with a laugh and the remark, "I did indeed see him, as I had wished; but I don't feel quite reconciled, even to this day, at the price I had to pay — a pair of splendid horses — for that interview."

General Lee was now the recognized leader of the Confederate forces. His knowledge of the Union leaders and his resourcefulness and daring made his soldiers feel absolute confidence in whatever he commanded them to do. It may be interesting, here, to note Lee's appearance at this time, — the year 1862. Dr. J. William Jones, one of Lee's devoted biographers, has written thus:

"General Lee was certainly one of the most superb-looking soldiers whom the world ever saw. I had first seen him on the day on which he came to offer his sword to the state that gave him birth, — the home of his love. At that time he had a smooth face, — save a moustache, — and his

hair had only a few silver threads in it. Now he wore a full beard; and that and his hair were as white as the driven snow; his graceful, knightly bearing, his eagle eye, and the very expression of his face, all betokened mingled firmness and gentleness, and showed the true soldier. But when Lee mounted, he sat his horse with easy grace; he seemed indeed a part of that horse, and was the finest horseman I ever saw. His famous war horse, Traveler (which Captain Gordon McCabe once said 'always stepped as if conscious that he bore a king on his back'), was as well known in the army as his master." The following description of him is given by General Long:

"Traveler was purchased by Lee during the West Virginia campaign. This noble steed bore his master royally throughout the war, and during several years afterward. A letter which General Lee dictated to his daughter Agnes seems to have been written in reply to some artist's inquiries. It reveals the tenderness of the great soldier, who, as we have before seen, had always cherished a warm regard for the many pets which were nurtured in his family. This letter, in part, runs thus: 'If I were an artist, like you, I would draw a true picture of Traveler, representing his fine proportions, muscular figure, deep chest, and short back, strong

haunches, flat legs, small head, broad forehead, delicate ears, quick eye, small feet, and black mane and tail. Such a picture would inspire a poet who could then depict his worth, and describe his endurance of toil, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and the dangers and sufferings through which he has passed. He could dilate upon his sagacity, affection, and his invariable response to every wish of his rider. He might even imagine his thoughts, through the long night marches, and the days of battle through which he has passed. But I am no artist; I can say only that he is a Confederate gray; he has carried me through the Seven Days' battle around Richmond, the Second Manassas battle, Sharpsburg (Antietam), and many others.'"

Evidently there was close sympathy between these two friends, man and horse. It is said that the intelligence and trust of Traveler in his master was so great that once, when the horse had been debarked from a steamboat, becoming excited by the confusion and strange sounds on the wharf, he started up the street, alone, and was on the point of breaking into a wild gallop. At this moment Lee, directing the crowd to cease their shouts, gave a peculiar whistle, and Traveler, hearing it, at once turned about toward the familiar signal, and returned to his master.

In trying to portray clearly and accurately the character of our distinguished soldier it has already been pointed out that this heroic man was so free from ordinary human faults that the historian or student is liable to picture him as an unreal fancy, spun from some admirer's brain. But General Walter H. Taylor, of Lee's staff, has given us many little reminiscences which throw light on that human side of the great man's character which cannot find expression in military reports, or in the opinions of critics who never met Lee face to face. General Taylor tells us that his commander disliked the routine of revising official papers and reports. "Therefore," he says, "I did not present any paper to him unless it was of serious importance. On one occasion, when I had not asked his attention to such matters for several days, it became needful for me to hold an interview with him. So I submitted the few papers which needed attention. He was not in a calm mood; he was fatigued and irritable; he showed the mood by little nervous jerks of the head, peculiar to himself, and some severity of manner. Noting this, I felt that my efforts to save his time and attention were not appreciated. Presently I threw down the paper that I was holding, and showed that I was angry. At this, he altered his manner instantly; in a per-

fectly calm tone he said, 'Colonel Taylor, when I lose my temper don't let it make you angry.'"

Then General Taylor, at that time a colonel, comments, "Was there ever a more gentle and considerate yet so positive a reproof? How magnanimous in that great soldier! My disrespectful manner justified stern treatment at the hands of my superior officer. But he, the foremost man of his day and generation, condescended to reason with me, his youthful subaltern, and to acknowledge, with a beautiful frankness, his own imperfection."

Lee's youngest son, Robert E. Lee, Jr., had wished, at the opening of hostilities between the North and South, to enter the Southern army. As he was a student at Washington College at the time, his father did not quite approve his plan; but later, in 1862, there was need of new men in the army, so he enlisted as a private in the Rock-bridge Artillery, of Stonewall Jackson's corps. This younger "Robert E. Lee" wrote an excellent book about his father, called "Recollections and Letters of General Lee." From that volume the following incident is taken.

Young Lee says, "When I again saw my father, he was riding at the head of Longstreet's men, on the field of Manassas; and we of Jackson's corps, hard pressed by Pope for two days, welcomed him

and the division that followed him, with cheers of delight. Two rifled guns, from our battery, were detached and sent to join Longstreet's advance artillery. I was 'Number One,' at one of those guns. We advanced rapidly, from hill to hill, firing as fast as we could, trying to keep ahead of our gallant comrades who had just arrived. As we were ordered to cease firing, and were lying down, resting beside our guns, General Lee and his staff galloped up. The general reined in Traveler close by my gun, not fifteen feet away. I looked at him and he did not recognize me. I was smeared with the red soil of that region and my face and hands were grimed with powder. I went over and spoke to General Mason, of the staff, and he did not know me; when I told him who I was he was much amused, and introduced me to several other officers whom I had previously met. Presently my father lowered his field glasses, after observing the enemy, and then General Mason spoke to him, 'Here, General, is somebody who wants to meet you.' My father, seeing before him only a mud-stained artilleryman, sponge-staff in hand, said, 'Well, my man, what can I do for you?' Then I replied, laughing, 'Why, General, don't you know me?' At once he recognized me, and told me how glad he was to see me safe and well."

This meeting between father and son was the merest accident; much of the time during the war they knew little of each other's location. In a letter which General Lee wrote at this time to his wife he says jocosely, "When you write to Rob, tell him to catch Pope for me; and also tell him to bring in his cousin, Louis Marshall, who, I am told, is on Pope's staff. I could forgive Louis for fighting against us, but not for his joining Pope."

Again Lee writes, "Johnny Lee (a nephew) saw Louis Marshall, after Jackson's last battle; he said that Louis looked wretched. I am sorry he is in such bad company. I suppose he could not help himself."

This reference to the Union army as being "bad company" was only a make-believe. In reality, General Lee knew the high quality of the men opposed to him, and felt no hatred of them. General Long, of Lee's staff, has said that his chief never used any bitter or violent language in speaking of the Federal officers and their men. Indeed, he often alluded to some of the Northern officers, whom he had known in other days, in terms of great friendliness.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM

It has been said, by some critics of the Civil War campaigns, that General Lee fought chiefly on the "defensive," and that his defensive strategy was what earned him his high reputation. But such critics probably base their views on Lee's masterly tactics near the end of the war, forgetting his earlier battles. The campaign which Lee now mapped out, in the autumn of 1862, was of the most aggressive, even daring, character.

Richmond was safe, but only for a little while, as Lee knew. He read the Northern newspapers regularly, and they babbled freely to the four quarters of heaven of all the Federal positions, plans, and equipment; he knew that the capital of the Confederacy must soon, for a second time, undergo attack unless he could distract attention from it. So he planned to cross the border-line of Virginia (that state being wholly Confederate) into Maryland (which divided its support between



North and South), and strengthen his own army with recruits; then he would threaten Washington, the nerve-center of the Union.

The government at Washington was much disappointed by Pope's failure to advance the Federal cause. General Halleck had been summoned by President Lincoln to act as military adviser at Washington, and this office he held throughout the war. Pope was now recalled to Washington for its defense. The command of the Army of the Potomac was twice offered to General Burnside, and was declined. Finally McClellan was restored to its command. This renewed the confidence of the troops, if it did not quite satisfy the North; and Lee, advancing out of Virginia, rejoiced that his opponent was once more the man whom he had outgeneraled in the Seven Days' battles before Richmond.

It was about the middle of September, 1862, the second year of the war, when Lee set forth on his march toward Maryland. He sent Stonewall Jackson to recapture Harper's Ferry. A few miles beyond this town lay the village of Sharpsburg, and close by it Antietam Creek, flowing into the Potomac River. At this place was fought one of the fiercest battles of the entire war, through a period of several days.

It was fought by Lee with 45,000 soldiers, and by McClellan with 85,000. McClellan had tried hard to reach Harper's Ferry and check Jackson; but he was never speedy in his movements, and he fired signal guns all along his route, to encourage the defenders of the besieged town. It was all in vain; he was too late. After a struggle of a few hours Harper's Ferry surrendered. Messengers on swift horses bore the news to Lee's army, and they were much gladdened. McClellan now turned his attention to Lee, and the two armies were soon facing each other.

The first move was made by McClellan, who sent General Hooker, on the evening of the 16th, across the "Creek." But this advance was checked by Jackson (now come from Harper's Ferry), near the "Dunker Church." Now came the sudden strategic move which only a master of war tactics could have conceived. Lee's plan of battle had become known to McClellan through an accident. Luckily Lee discovered this fact. At once he changed his plans. Although a part of his force had just been driven back at the passes of South Mountain, he decided to take up a position at Sharpsburg. There he was supported by Generals Ewell, Jones, Jackson, Longstreet, A. P. Hill, Hood, and others. McClellan's generals included Hooker, Sumner,

Sedgwick, Franklin, and many equally famous leaders.

The fighting, on that first day of "Antietam," was as fierce and deadly as on any one day of the terrible four years. General Longstreet, a veteran of many battles, so stated in his book, "From Manassas to Appomattox." If we were to look for the point, in all that battle line, where the struggle was fiercest, we would name the "Sunken Road," where for nearly two hours "good men and true," in blue and gray, savagely sought one another's lives; and the awful gulf was at last filled to its bloody brim with dead and dying men, so that persons might cross upon them, as upon a ghastly corduroy road. That place is called, to-day, "Bloody Lane;" and the tourist may profitably stand beside it, and muse, not only upon the horrors of war, but upon the folly and futility of war, which settles nothing on a basis of justice, but simply decides which of the contestants is the more skillful in killing human beings. We are nearing the day when we shall settle all disputes between nations as we already do between individuals and states, by federation and judicial procedure.

At the close of two days' fighting at Antietam each side claimed a victory; and in such a state of rival claims the victory is usually conceded to

the army that holds its ground. At Antietam the Confederates retreated, but they left few spoils for the enemy, and defiantly intrenched themselves just across the Potomac. It is easy, at this remote day, to point out the "might-have-beens"; one of them, agreed upon by most historians, is that if McClellan had sent his soldiers into the fight in larger masses he could have put his enemy to rout. However, a nominal victory remained for the Northern troops, and each side lost about one quarter of its men.

So the battle of Sharpsburg, or Antietam, was over, and 20,000 men lay dead or wounded on the field; while thousands of homes, North and South, knew not as yet their grief and desolation. We have already seen, in a previous chapter, how a war that is fought, all within one country — an "internecine" war, as it is called — is more terrible than one between two alien races. One incident in the battle of Antietam well illustrates this point. At the ford, near Burnside bridge, a Northern colonel, leading his regiment, was killed by a Confederate division which was commanded by that colonel's brother.

But the war, being fully under way, must nevertheless go on. The Federal authorities at Washington, disappointed that McClellan had not

followed up his repulse of the Southern troops at Antietam by a swift pursuit and another attack, relieved him from his command, and General Ambrose Burnside was put in his place. This excellent officer, as we have noted, did not desire so much responsibility. He probably knew his own abilities, preferring to serve in a subordinate position; and the battle of Fredericksburg, fought on December 13th, 1862, proved that he was right.

Meanwhile, Lee was resting and strengthening his army, and none knew better than he how to do this. He himself, as much as any, needed rest and healing; for he fought that battle of Antietam as a disabled but determined leader, for not long before he had been injured in both his hands and wrists by a sudden start of his horse, Traveler, as he was standing with the bridle-rein over one arm, beside the horse. All through the battle he was forced to walk or to ride in an ambulance, leaving Traveler to be led by an orderly. Singularly enough, Jackson also was suffering in that battle from an injury received by the rearing and falling of a horse. The two great chieftains certainly fought under difficulties; and when the struggle was ended both were as much in need of rest and recuperation as were their subordinates.

In time, officers and men of the ranks regained their usual strength, and the carnage of battle seemed for a time far away. Lee's soldiers not only believed him to be the ablest among all the leaders on both sides, but his noble character, as they came in contact with it, called out their profound respect and affection. A story is told, on good authority, which illustrates the stern simplicity of his daily mode of life. Indulgence in strong drink was always abhorrent to him, and he frowned upon it, whenever it came to his notice, among officers or private soldiers. One day, shortly after the Antietam battle, he called together some of his staff, saying, with a peculiar smile, "Come and join me in my tent! I've had something pretty good sent me. It's in a jug; and the man who presented it to me told me that it was the very best that the country about here produces."

His friends promptly accepted his invitation; but some of them, warned by his significant smile, had suspicions. "Thanks to you, General," they responded. "Show us the quality of it!"

So they stood around him, each with a battered, rusty tin cup, such as they made use of in their rough campaigning; and Lee, with much gravity and care, as if every drop were precious, slowly raised the jug, uncorked it, and poured out into

the first man's cup, some — fresh buttermilk! "There!" he declared, "that's the best this country can produce! I hope you will enjoy it."

And certainly they did enjoy it; and they enjoyed, as well, the pleasantries of their splendid commander, who usually was too heavily burdened with care to relax in this delightful way.

Let it here be said that General Lee's manner changed gradually, throughout the war, as reverses came; as the lists of dead and wounded mounted up, and as the outlook for the South grew darker. That great man's face often wore a smile, but it was the smile of a consecrated saint or hero; it bore the light of a holy resignation to a Supreme Will. Some who met him could not understand it. Others, of keener sympathy, who knew how unsullied a conscience he bore, who knew how unselfish was his devotion to his state, — these recognized that smile as of heaven, not of earth, and behind it, ever, the clear mind and strong will of one who was putting forth every atom of his strength in the cause he had espoused.

The battle of Antietam being ended, probably not one of the combatants knew how important an influence that fierce struggle was fated to exercise at Washington. But the truth was that President Lincoln had been holding back, for months,



a document which was of the deepest significance, not only to three millions of enslaved negroes, but to the entire country as well. That document was the "Emancipation Proclamation." Lincoln had seen from the first that under the demand of "State Rights" lay hidden the great problem of slavery. He felt sure that this deeper and more fundamental cause of the Secession must come to the front, sooner or later. So he had worked out his views on the subject, committed them to paper, and locked that momentous document in his desk as early in the year 1862 as July 22d, awaiting the day when the North would listen to its announcement favorably. The battle of Antietam was fought on September 17th; and, although both sides claimed the victory, the North, as we have seen, could present better claims, inasmuch as the Confederates had retreated, short as that retreat was; and the Federal troops rejoiced, and their confidence in ultimate success was strengthened. Now came the psychological moment for this great Proclamation. It could now be issued by the Federal government as one incident in a victorious programme, not as an attempt to fortify anxious spirits in the hour of defeat. So President Lincoln called together his Cabinet, and read them what he had written two months before, saying to them with deep solem-



nity, "The enemy has now been driven out of Maryland, and I am going to fulfill the promise I made to myself and my God. I have called you together to hear what I have written. I do not want your advice in the matter; I have settled all that for myself."

Here we have the tender, wise, brave spirit of Abraham Lincoln asserting itself in all its moral and spiritual sublimity. Like Robert E. Lee he possessed a nature essentially devout; like Lee he had put away from himself all petty or selfish interests.

The "Proclamation," which Lincoln read to his Cabinet on that 22d day of September, 1862, ran substantially thus: "On the first day of January, 1863, all persons held as slaves within any state, or any designated part of a state whose people shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

IN all this recital of the events of Robert E. Lee's campaigns, we must remember that he was directing only a part of the Southern army in its struggle against the Union; and the battles fought in Virginia and Maryland were not the only battles of the war. Fighting was going on, during these first two years, in several of the Southern states, and, quite as important, the navies of the South and North were grappling with each other on the ocean and in bays and rivers among the states. Already General Ulysses S. Grant had won laurels by his capture, assisted by Commodore Foote, of Fort Henry; Fort Donelson also was taken. Then came the defeat of that singular Confederate craft, the *Merrimac*, by the recently invented *Monitor*. On April 6th and 7th occurred the battle of Shiloh, while on April 28th, 1862, Admiral Farragut captured New Orleans.

These stirring events were all-important features of the war in the West, but our study of General Lee

restricts us to the East, and chiefly to two states. The nearness to each other of Washington and Richmond naturally affected the plans of both North and South. Each side strove to capture the other's seat of government; and Lee, at this time, December, 1862, was pushing up into Maryland to threaten Washington, thus diverting the Union Army of the Potomac from marching upon Richmond.

Enough has been written on any one of the principal battles of the Civil War to fill an entire book. On the other hand, the battle of Fredericksburg (December 13th, 1862) might be condensed, as in some school history of the United States, to one short paragraph. Indeed, one of the best short histories of our country thus speaks of this battle: "McClellan's course had dissatisfied the administration, and his command was given to General Ambrose Burnside, who attempted to move upon Richmond by way of Fredericksburg. But Lee placed himself upon the hills behind the town, and when Burnside crossed the river, met his attack and completely defeated him."

Such a summary of the day's doings tells little of the heroism and agony of which the day was full. These vital revelations come out as we read more minutely of the details of the terrific struggle.

Lee had come down the river from the west, stationing his forces on the heights above the town, awaiting the advance of Burnside, who was now in command of the Army of the Potomac. With artillery thoroughly intrenched, the Confederates, 78,000 in number, awaited the attack of the Federals, 113,000 in number. It is generally understood, now, that Burnside, a kind-hearted man and efficient in more limited fields of duty, was, on this dreadful day, confused by his heavy cares and unequal to the strategic demands made upon him.

The Federal troops laid pontoon bridges across the Rappahannock River, on the eleventh of the month, and a fog had aided them in this. The next day a crossing was completed. On the morning of the thirteenth the Federals began their attack of the hills where the Confederates were intrenched. With great loss of life for the Union forces, the crest of the hill was reached, and then was lost. The fiercest scene of the battle was the storming of "Marye's Heights," which were strongly protected.

"Six times did the brave Union troops attempt to fight their way up that part of the hill," wrote General Lee, "and our infantry mowed them down." General Couch, one of the Federal commanders, overcome by anguish on seeing this awful slaughter,

exclaimed fiercely, "Great God, see how our brave fellows are falling! It is nothing less than murder, now." And General Hooker, "Fighting Joe Hooker," who had complained, up to that day, that he had not seen fighting enough, when he witnessed the hopeless attempt of his gallant Union soldiers to obey orders which meant certain death, put spurs to his horse, galloped over to Burnside, and begged him to allow the forces to fall back. But Burnside, now almost deranged by the plight in which he found himself and his men, became obstinate, and ordered the assault to be continued. Next came "Humphrey's Charge," in which 45,000 soldiers, untrained men, were led by him in a bayonet charge at the bullet-swept line. Thereupon that stone wall became a "sheet of flame" as the Confederates behind it shot down the attacking party.

The battle of Fredericksburg was a bloody one, but chiefly for the Union forces, who were on the "aggressive." The Confederates won the battle more easily than they won any other battle of the war. That was due largely to their advantageous position. There were scores of incidents connected with that struggle which are interesting to read, and some of them even humorous, amid the gloom of smoke and death. "During the battle of Fred-

ericksburg," writes Major Robert Stiles, of the Southern army, "I was sent into the city with a message to General Barksdale. I rode down one street swept by artillery fire; in the distance came along the street a lone woman, walking calmly toward the general's headquarters. She seemed to think the screaming shells 'interesting.' She stopped, at one place, to gaze unconcernedly into a chasm just torn in the sidewalk by a projectile. It was an extremely dangerous place, that street, at that moment. Presently she arrived at the general's headquarters, in one of the houses. She knocked, and waited. One of the staff, throwing open the door and seeing her, exclaimed in amazement, raising his hands, 'What on earth, Madam, are you doing here? Do go to some safer place!'

"She smiled and replied tartly, 'Young gentleman, you seem excited. Will you please say to the general that a lady wishes to speak with him?'

"The young officer exclaimed, 'He can't see you; he's too busy.' But she would not be put off, and continued, 'General Barksdale is a Southern gentleman, sir, and will not refuse to see a lady who has called upon him.'

"He attempted to send her away, but in vain. General Barksdale now appeared in the doorway. 'For God's sake, Madam,' he cried, actually wring-

ing his hands in his fear for her safety, 'go and seek some place of safety! I'll send an officer with you, to help you find one.'

"She smiled back at him, and while he fumed and almost swore, she said quietly, 'General Barksdale, my cow has just been struck by a shell. She is fat, and I don't wish the Yankees to get her. If you will send somebody to butcher her, you are welcome to the meat.'"

A very self-controlled person she certainly was, and Major Stiles narrates further: "Years afterward I delivered a memorial address at Fredericksburg, and I told this incident. Immediately I noticed an increased interest on the part of the audience. They ceased looking at me and gazed with amusement toward one part of the hall. My eyes soon followed theirs, and there, before me, sat the very lady. Then the audience arose and gave three cheers."

As an illustration of the way in which war can embitter human hearts, and shatter friendships, there was the incident in this battle told of a young man, Lane Brandon, a graduate of Yale and a pupil at the Harvard Law School when the war broke out. He was at the head of a force of Confederates which began skirmishing with a Federal force advancing against them. Brandon suddenly received a



command to retreat in good order; but, at the same moment, he learned that the enemy's force was commanded by Abbott, who had been his chum at the Harvard Law School. Instantly Brandon became excited, furious. "I'll not retreat before him," he cried. "I'll show him that we know how to fight." So he ordered an advance; but this was likely to disarrange the plans already laid by the Confederates. The only way to check his frenzied words and acts was to put him under arrest. This was done, and one of his subordinates led the troop out of the town.

When we contrast with such a madness of excitement the bearing and words of General Lee, we can see what a mastery over himself the great soldier exercised. Those who have written about him as he appeared on that day tell us that he was calm, even smiling, at times, and again sad, yet never losing his clearness of mind, never giving way to the powerful emotions which must have been surging in his heart. And how impartially he analyzed his own feelings! Some one heard him reflect, as he gazed out over the battle-field, and responded to its tremendous excitement, "It is well that this is so terrible, else we might grow fond of it." There spoke the true heart of the great leader. No such self-repression would have been possible to



Napoleon Bonaparte, who reveled in the excitement of battle, with but little care for the wounded and dead, who were to him only pawns in the game he was playing.

In Robert E. Lee, Jr.'s "Recollections" he says: "I did not see my father at any time during the fighting. Days afterward I met him, calm and composed. He never referred to his great victory, except to deplore the loss of his brave officers and men, and the sufferings of the sick and wounded. He repeatedly spoke of the hardships endured so bravely by the inhabitants of Fredericksburg, the old and feeble, the women and children; their privations and sufferings cut him to the heart."

It is well for us to know, so far as we may, what the realities of battle are, in order that we may use our influence to have misunderstandings and disputes settled, not by war, which settles nothing justly, but by courts supported by a policing force.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BATTLE OF CHANCELLORSVILLE

THE year 1862 drew to a close, the New Year came in, and, until April, the two armies, the "Army of Northern Virginia" and the "Army of the Potomac," lay in winter quarters, only a few miles apart. Many were the hardships of both armies; but the Southern army suffered more, because the Confederate government could not command the necessities of life as could the Northern states.

The Rappahannock River lay between the two armies. The Confederates had their pickets along the south bank, while the Union troops had stationed pickets along the northern bank. During those long, dreary winter months of waiting the men in the two armies grew friendly, exchanging articles and sending one another jocose messages. Quite a fleet of toy sailboats was constructed by the ingenious soldiers; these tiny boats were fully rigged and painted, and used to carry across the river newspapers, coffee, tea, tobacco, sugar, and similar luxuries, exchanged by the "boys in blue" and the "boys in gray." One

singular pastime, often repeated, was the "Snow Fight." The Southern soldiers, after becoming rested from the exhaustion of the battle of Fredericksburg, were bored by their idleness; so, whenever a sufficient amount of snow fell, they organized into camps and companies, snowballing one another with great vigor. These snow fights were highly organized. Strategy was used. Some combatants even received ugly bruises. Such mimic conflicts seem strange indeed, when one reflects that the soldiers had just been through the terrible battle of Fredericksburg, and were on the eve of another, Chancellorsville, which was to be equally dreadful. Still, when we recall the fact that the average age of the men in the Civil War was twenty-one years, we can see that they were really "boys," having the light spirits and elasticity of youth.

At length the winter wore away, and the trees and plants began to show the action of vital currents in their veins. One of the earliest plants to show the coming of spring was the sassafras; and the Confederates, as one of them has since told us, "chewed it, smelled it, and drank it." One of the epithets applied, in consequence, to them by the Union soldiers, as one Confederate veteran has recorded, with amusement, was "Darn sassafras-tea-drinking rebels!"

But with the return of spring came the revival of hostilities. General Hooker was now in command of the Union forces, and he laid his plans to drive the Southern army toward Richmond. His plans, in themselves, were good ones, but they were out-matched by Lee in such a masterly way that sound war critics call the resulting battle of Chancellorsville the most wonderful of all Lee's victories. Stated in a condensed form, the battle, which was fought on May 2d and 3d, 1863, developed in this way.

Hooker started on the aggressive; he moved, with a strong force, across the Rappahannock, by a ford several miles above Lee's army. To conceal this movement, he attacked vigorously from the middle of his line, and he also made a feint of attacking a few miles below. At first the Confederate commander could not be sure which of the Union advances was the main one, but he soon grasped the situation; and he sent one body of troops down the river to oppose that Federal advance, while he sent another force up the river to oppose the other one. But — and here was his daring strategic move — he used as few of his men as possible in the fighting at the upper ford, and sent Stonewall Jackson, with another body of troops, out beyond and around that upper crossing. Thus

he flanked the right wing of the Union army. Then, closing in, he got the Union troops of the upper ford between two fires, cutting them up terribly and routing them. Finally, to complete his plan, a part of the Confederate soldiers at the upper ford were hurried back down the river to the lower ford, there reënforcing the men who had been giving way before the Union onslaught; thus he turned the Southern retreat at that point into a glorious advance.

This daring plan of battle could never have been carried out except by seasoned campaigners like Lee's men, and by a master of swift action like Stonewall Jackson. Jackson's corps was seen and recognized by Union officers as it was moving along toward the northwest, in the flanking movement. But so completely had those officers and their commander, Hooker, misread the nature of Jackson's action that they thought he was in retreat. Therefore they relaxed their efforts against the small force directly before them, deeming the battle already won. Many of them had even stacked arms and were cooking before the camp-fires when suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, came the impact upon their rear of Jackson's corps, and they were slaughtered like sheep.

It was in this battle that General Stonewall

Jackson was killed. At this stage of the war the matter of uniforms was confusing. Soldiers of both armies had replenished their worn-out garments from the dead bodies of friends and foes on the battle-field, so that a man's clothing did not always indicate on which side he was fighting. Serious accidents occurred from this cause; and one of the most serious was the shooting of Stonewall Jackson by a group of Confederates, they mistaking him for one of the enemy.

We may easily infer the deep and tender relations which existed between these two great military chieftains, Lee and Jackson, from the hasty correspondence which passed between them at the close of this battle. Lee wrote to Jackson:

"I cannot express my regret at this occurrence; could I have directed events, I should have chosen, for the good of the country, to have been disabled in your stead. I congratulate you on the victory, which is due to your skill and energy."

This was before the full seriousness of Jackson's wounds was realized. And he replied to Lee in a similar generous and noble strain, "Better that ten Jacksons should fall than one Lee." A few days afterward, when Lee was told that his favorite general was improving, he wrote to him playfully, "You are better off than I am. For while you have

only lost your left arm, I have lost my *right*." And still later, on hearing that Jackson was not so well, Lee wrote, "Tell him that I am praying for him, as I believe I never prayed for myself."

But the battle of Chancellorsville was a great victory for the Southern side in general, and for Robert E. Lee in particular. It was filled, as all battles are, with horrors of physical and mental suffering, yet there were amusing features as well. One of the artillery battalions had a pet dog named "Stonewall Jackson." He was small, of a pure white color, and of a brave and military spirit. He had been trained by one of the officers to attend roll call, sit up at "Attention," hold a pipe between his teeth, and, at the command "Pipes Out," the master slipped the little dog's pipe from between his teeth down into his left paw, at his side; and then the intelligent animal sat erect, like a soldier, until the inspection was over. As for battles, when most dogs would be terrified by the smoke and noise, little "Stonewall" simply loved them. At Chancellorsville he ran about excitedly, barking wildly, and trying to help his soldier friends. One of them has told us of him as follows: "It is surprising that he was not killed, or wounded, or lost, in the confusion of battle, especially during those three days at the last when the brigade changed position quickly.



At such a time whoever happened to be nearest him, if he could catch hold of him, caught him up and dropped him into some empty compartment of a limber-chest, clapped down the cover, and then the gun dashed away to its new position, where some one would release him, and again he would leap and bark as if wild with delight."

One incident of Chancellorsville will serve to make us realize further the involved and fratricidal nature of this Civil War. Major General Stiles, already referred to and quoted, has told us this:

"General Semmes captured a Union regiment, near the end of the battle; I heard that they were 'Hundred Day Men' from New Haven, Connecticut. That city was the seat of Yale College, my Alma Mater; and I walked out to look at the captured regiment, thinking that I might recognize some of them. I was kept at the proper distance by the guard, but I could get near enough to see their faces. Several of them I at once recognized; but, for a time, I myself was not identified. Then a little fellow who had been in my Sunday School class at New Haven found me out. How he did it was wonderful, for I had changed greatly. I wore no hat, my hair was closely clipped, my skin was burned to a reddish brown; I wore a flannel shirt, pants, belt, and shoes; shirt wide open,



sleeves rolled up, clothes and skin spattered black with powder-water from my sponge where I had been serving my gun in the artillery brigade. But that little chap called out, suddenly, and a score of others took up the shout, 'Bob Stiles! Bob Stiles!'

"General Lee heard them and called me to him, 'Do you know these people?' (That was the phrase he always used when speaking of the Northerners or of the Federal soldiers.) I told him the facts, and he said, 'The guard will pass you, and I wish you to go among these old friends of yours, and see what you can find out.' I did so, and met many whom I had formerly associated with, and was able, afterward, to inform General Lee on several points of interest to him."

One more incident of this tremendous battle will help us to understand Lee's strong, calm grasp of the tumultuous situation. Again I quote from Major General Stiles's volume, "Four Years Under Marse Robert."

"The courageous, consecrated chaplain of the Seventeenth Mississippi we knew as "Brother William", a little man of heroic spirit but somewhat excitable. I was pausing, with my men, near the road from Fredericksburg down the river. Suddenly I saw Brother William coming, on a horse, at full speed; I think he had no saddle, only a blan-

ket, and his horse was reeking and panting. As he drew near he saw General Lee and rode directly to him. I followed as fast as I could, fearing some news of disaster. Brother William leaped from his horse and, with eyes fairly starting from their sockets, began to tell the general that Sedgwick (Federal) had smashed Early (Confederate) and was coming rapidly up toward us.

"I have never seen anything more majestically calm than General Lee was at that moment. I felt the striking contrast between him and that dear little Brother William. Something like a grave sweet smile began to express itself on the general's face. But he checked it, and, raising his left hand gently, as if to protect himself, he interrupted the excited speaker, checking and controlling him instantly, and at the same time saying, quietly, 'I thank you very much, but you and your horse are fatigued and overheated. Take him to that shady tree yonder, and you and he rest for a few moments. I'm talking to General McLaws just now. I'll call you as soon as we are through.'

"Brother William was dominated but not quite satisfied; he began a mild protest, but he could not push it, in the face of Lee's quiet aversion. He desisted, and I went with him over to the tree. At once he began pouring out to me his exciting

information. 'All is lost down there,' he gasped. 'Sedgwick has stormed the heights and seized the town; our brigade has been cut off and perhaps captured. Early, too, has been badly beaten; thirty thousand victorious Federals were coming rapidly up the road, along the river, toward us. I am one of the few to escape; I seized this horse and galloped off at full speed to warn Lee.'

"I tried to suggest that probably General Lee had been told of the serious repulse, that doubtless Early had sent him word, but Brother William thought this impossible; he himself had started promptly and had ridden hard.

"At that moment Lee finished with McLaws, came over quietly to Brother William, and, with a pleasant smile, greeted him. 'What is it that you were about to tell me regarding Major Sedgwick?'

"Brother William hastily ran through his gloomy message to which Lee listened with entire serenity, and then rejoined equably, and with what looked like a mirthful twinkle in his kind eyes, 'I am very much obliged to you. Major Sedgwick is a very nice man; I don't think he would hurt us very badly, but we are going to attend to him at once. I have just sent General McLaws to make a special call upon him.'

"I did not at that moment understand all the

bearings of the situation ; but of course I could see that our great leader held the situation in his own strong grasp. Later I learned that Sedgwick had formerly been a major in the regiment of which Lee had been colonel, and they had been close friends. Hence his humorous way of referring to him."

But this incident was only one out of many which were developed, minute by minute, throughout the fierce conflict, as the fortunes of battle rose and fell. Bravery there was in abundance, on both sides ; but the victory inclined more and more to the Confederates, and at last rested with them. Toward the end of the battle a situation arose which must have brought to General Lee as full a measure of proud satisfaction as ever may come to a victorious commander. It was eloquently set forth by Colonel Charles Marshall in his address at a Soldiers' Memorial Meeting in Baltimore.

"General Lee," said Colonel Marshall, "accompanied the troops in person ; and, as they emerged from the fierce combat they had waged in the depths of that tangled wilderness, driving the superior forces of the enemy before them across open ground, he rode into their midst. The scene is one that can never be effaced from the minds of those that witnessed it. The troops were pressing forward, with all the ardor of combat. The white smoke of

musketry fringed the front of the line of battle, while the artillery on the hills in the rear of the infantry shook the earth with its thunder and filled the air with the wild shrieks of shells that plunged into the masses of retreating foes. To add greater horror and sublimity to the scene, the Chancellorsville House and the woods surrounding it were wrapped in flames. In the midst of this awful scene, General Lee, mounted on the horse we know so well, rode to the front of his advancing battalions. His presence was the signal for one of those outbursts of enthusiasm which none can appreciate who have not witnessed them. The fierce soldiers, the wounded, crawling with feeble limbs from the fury of the devouring flames, all seemed possessed by a common impulse. One long, unbroken cheer, in which the feeble cry of those who lay helpless on the earth blended with the strong voices of those who still fought, rose high above the roar of battle, and hailed the presence of the victorious chief. He sat, in the full realization of all that soldiers dream of — triumph; and, as I looked on him in the complete fruition of the success which his genius, courage, and confidence in his army had won, I thought that it must have been from some such scene that men in ancient days ascended to the dignity of the gods."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TURN OF THE TIDE

It is generally held, by historians, that the battle which was fought near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on the first three days of July, 1863, marked a distinct turn in the tide of the war. The Confederacy had already lost heavily along the Mississippi, and now the Army of Northern Virginia, under General Lee, was beaten back from its campaign in the Middle States.

From almost the beginning General Lee's policy had been an aggressive one, whenever opportunity offered, within the limits of the Old Dominion; now he had pushed northward, across Maryland, and into Pennsylvania. The people of the North feared that he might attack Harrisburg, and were even anxious for the safety of Baltimore and Washington. The Confederate leader's real object in pushing so far north was at least three-fold. He wished to divert Federal attention from Richmond, he hoped to win over supporters to the Confederacy from Maryland, and he needed sup-

plies of food and clothing for his army. His army, at this time, was perhaps the strongest fighting force in the world. As Lee said of them, proudly, "They will go anywhere, and do anything, if properly led." They were now seasoned veterans, confident because of victories at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, and wholly devoted to their able leader; yet they were in a most needy condition as to food and clothing. Willingly and joyfully, however, they were undergoing hardships in a cause which they believed conscientiously and fervently to be a righteous one; and it should here be noted, to the great credit of General Lee and his tattered, half-starved soldiers, that, in their march through the fertile fields and prosperous towns of Maryland and Pennsylvania, they committed few if any depredations. This self-restraint was then unusual in an invading army, and is so to-day. It was entirely due to their noble leader's express orders, and to their complete and loyal obedience to his wishes.

The battle of Gettysburg has become, historically, the most famous struggle in all the war. It was fought on ground which Lee had pointed out to one of his staff, months before, as the probable scene of an encounter with the Northern army, yet it came on with a suddenness not anticipated



by either side. The cavalry has well been called the "eyes of the army," as it scouts and brings back information about the location and numbers of the enemy. This service, at the present day, is being largely accomplished, and most effectively accomplished, by *aëroplanes*.

General Jeb Stuart, the dashing leader of Lee's cavalry, had been sent ahead of the Confederate army, and through zeal and boldness had gone too far afield. So that when General Buford, of the Union forces, came into contact with the advance lines of the Southerners, they, lacking the information which Stuart should have supplied, were taken by surprise; but General A. P. Hill promptly met the attack, and the sound of firing drew other divisions of both armies directly to the spot.

General George G. Meade was now the Union commander, impulsive "Fighting Joe" Hooker having resigned. Meade's leadership in this great battle brought him deserved praise. For in these summer days of 1863 the fortunes of the war were wavering. The highest bravery, however, was shown on both sides; acts of heroism were so numerous during those sanguinary three days as to become almost the rule rather than the exception. Even in the hottest part of the conflict General Lee, as usual, maintained his self-poise.



Once, when he chanced to pass near a mounted officer who was beating his horse, because the poor animal had shied at a bursting shell, the commander called to his officer, in a friendly way, "Don't be too hard on him, Captain! I've got just the same sort of foolish horse myself."

Yet, despite this outward calm, Lee felt deeply the horrors of such slaughter as filled those days at Gettysburg. One week after it was over he wrote to General Pickett, the hero of the famous "Pickett's Charge," "No one grieves more than I do at the loss suffered by your noble division." We well know, from Lee's whole life, that he meant just what he wrote and said. Compare such warm human expressions, often on his lips, with the words attributed by the French writer, Taine, to Napoleon Bonaparte after his Russian campaign: "That campaign cost me the lives of 300,000 men. But what are the lives of a million, to a man like me!"

The total number of men engaged at Gettysburg was about 70,000 on the Confederate side, and 100,000 on the Union side. Still, these men were not all fighting on any one day. Only a third of the number got into action on the first day. Of that number many were killed or wounded; and Lee lost, in the three days' fighting, in killed, dis-

abled, and missing, about 20,000; while Meade lost about 23,000. Lee stated afterward, in a letter to an inquiring historian, that the failure of the Confederate forces to gain a complete victory was due to the fact that they were put into the struggle in detachments, instead of going in all together, along the whole line.

To this statement should be added the unpleasant but evident fact that General Longstreet, a powerful fighter when once engaged but inclined to resent suggestions from his superior officer, was slow to obey Lee's orders. He did not "go in" as early in the conflict as was needful; and many Confederate veterans declare bluntly that he, by his obstinacy, lost the battle to the whole army.

The field of Gettysburg to-day, while much altered, retains more reminders of the great struggle than any other of the Southern battle-fields. Many monuments and memorials have been erected upon it, but they have not obliterated the main outlines of the scene. Rather, they have served to make clear to us what the position and movements of the armies must have been. In general it may be said that the battle-ground, lengthwise from north to south, is valley-like, with swells of ground a mile apart, Cemetery Hill being the stronghold of the Union forces, with the famous "Round Top"

and "Little Round Top" at its southern extremity. Seminary Ridge, across the valley, was held by the Confederates.

A Grand Army veteran, who was wounded in this battle, has given us a reminiscence which strengthened the admiration he had previously felt for the illustrious Confederate commander. He says: "It was the last day of the fight. I was badly wounded; a ball had shattered my left leg; I was lying helpless on the slope of Cemetery Hill. As Lee led his army in retreat, he came near me; I had thus far in the war hated the South bitterly, and as I saw Lee but a short distance away, feeble as I was from loss of blood, I raised myself, looked defiantly at him, and shouted, "Hurrah for the Union!" The general looked towards me, rode nearer, dismounted, and — well, I confess I thought he meant to kill me. But not so. He came and looked down at me with such a sad expression that any fear left me, and I simply wondered. Then he took my right hand, looked tenderly into my eyes, and said, 'My son, I hope you will soon be well.' If I should live to be a thousand years old I shall never forget the expression in his face. After he left me, I cried myself to sleep, there upon the bloody ground."

Some men could not understand Lee's high moral

and spiritual plane which made him capable of that act and similar acts. But most of us can comprehend it, even though we fear we could not attain to it under similar circumstances.

Probably the most exciting hour, in those many hours of the three Gettysburg days, was the charge of Pickett's division down Seminary Ridge, across the valley and up Cemetery Hill, there to be repulsed by the Union "Second Corps," under General Hancock. That daring and deadly charge was made, as Lee knew, without the favoring conditions he had desired. He had arranged, as his best plan of attack, that General Pickett should lead the assaulting column, and that he should be supported by the divisions of McLaws and Hood, and as large a part of A. P. Hill's command as he could spare. Accordingly, at twelve o'clock of July 3d, on that third day of continuous fighting, the signal for battle sounded. And as is usual in such a situation, the attack was begun by the Confederates with a heavy fire of artillery. The Federal batteries on Cemetery Hill, the ridge opposite, at once replied. General Hancock, of the Federal side, has written that he thought it the most terrific cannonade that ever had taken place, up to that date.

Presently the Federal guns slackened their fire, and at length became silent. The Confederate

batteries then did the same, and an absolutely deathlike silence reigned on the field.

This cessation of the Federal fire was the favorable moment for the Confederate attack; and Pickett's division, fresh troops all, sprang to the charge. A brigade commanded by Pettigrew supported their left, and Wilcox's brigade supported their right. The total number of men thus attacking was about 15,000. As soon as the Federals saw them coming down the hill they opened fire fiercely from their batteries which had not been put out of commission. A long half mile was the distance across the field which the Confederates must traverse. A second seemed like a minute, and a minute like an hour, as those brave men sped over the rough ground, with the Federal guns mowing them down like ripened grain. Soon Pickett's supporting brigades fell back in disorder, and he with his division alone continued the rush "into the jaws of death."

Let an eyewitness, General Long, continue the terrible recital: "The gallant Virginians marched steadily forward, through the storm of shot and shell that burst upon their devoted ranks, with a gallantry that has never been surpassed. As they approached the ridge their lines were torn by incessant volleys of musketry, as by a deadly hail.

Yet with unflinching courage the brave fellows broke into the double-quick, and with an irresistible charge burst into the Federal lines and drove everything before them toward the crest of Cemetery Hill, leaping the breastworks and planting their standards on the captured guns with shouts of victory.

"The success that General Lee had hoped and expected was gained, but it was dearly bought and short-lived. His plan had gone astray through the failure of the supporting columns. Now was the time that they should have come to the aid of their victorious comrades, but, alas, Heath's division, which two days before had behaved with the greatest gallantry, had not been able to face the terrible fire of the Federal lines, while the other supports were too remote to afford timely relief! The victory which seemed well within the grasp of the Confederate army was lost as soon as won. On every side the enemy closed in on Pickett's brigades, concentrating on them the fire of every gun in that part of their lines. It was impossible to long withstand this terrific fusillade. The band of heroes broke and fell back, leaving the greater part of their number dead or wounded upon the field, or captive in the hands of their foes."

Other points in the field witnessed scenes almost as terrible. One veteran, a Southerner, has given

a brief but vivid picture which portrays war in its veritable horrors: "I recall Latimer's battalion which had fought nobly in an artillery duel. Men, horses, and guns were huddled like so much wreckage in a little saucer-like depression behind Culp's Hill. The guns were dismounted and disabled, gun-carriages were smashed and splintered, ammunition had exploded, limbers were upset, wounded horses were kicking and plunging, dashing out the brains of wounded men around and under them, while cannoneers with pistols were crawling about, through the wreck of harnesses and equipments, shooting the struggling horses, to save the lives of the wounded, helpless men."

In our sympathy for human beings in their anguish and agony upon the battle-field, we must not forget the almost equal mental and physical agony of the horses who shared those perils. As one Southern soldier said, "It's worse for the horses than for the men, because the men enlisted to get killed, while the horses had no choice."

A veteran of the war, evidently a man sympathetic with animals, has written this regarding the mental distress of horses in battle:

"I have seen these faithful, sensitive creatures under fire; and sometimes, when shells were screaming over their heads, they crouched in terror

until their bodies nearly touched the ground. The artillery horses always seemed much less fearful in battle if their drivers remained with them, especially on their backs; and when the men went away, for a time, and returned, the horses welcomed them with whinnies of joy, and rubbed their heads against their drivers, with appealing affection. And the poor creatures loved not only their drivers, but one another; I have heard and seen a horse whose mate had been killed at his side utter agonizing neighs, shuddering violently; and I have known a horse, thus bereft of his mate, to refuse to eat, to pine away, and die."

Such heartrending details of the carnage of battle might be quoted almost without limit. There were portions of nearly every battle, in our Civil War, which were as terrible as the famous "Pickett's Charge." It is easy for civilian war critics, when a war is over, to sit around tables, with maps, and point out defects in strategy; but such surveys and criticisms are likely to vary considerably from the level of sound judgment; because, in the exigencies of actual combat, conditions are constantly arising which demand action, and speedy action, yet could hardly be stated at their full value years after the fight was over. Then, too, among the actual participants in a battle, not one



of them sees all of the battle as the commanding general sees it. And even the commander, when of as generous a nature as Lee's, may lighten the weight of blame for his subordinate officers by assuming too much blame for himself.

Colonel Theodore Roosevelt has given this testimony to the ability of Robert E. Lee: "As a mere military man, Washington himself cannot rank with the wonderful war chief who, for four years, led the Army of Northern Virginia. He will rank with the greatest of all English-speaking military leaders; and this holds true, even when the last and chief of his antagonists, Ulysses S. Grant, may claim to stand as the full equal of Marlborough and Wellington."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AGAIN DEFENDING RICHMOND

THE terrible battle of Gettysburg was over. The losses of the Confederate army and the Federal army had been about the same; opinions are not harmonious on this point; but the Confederate army, after remaining a few days in position, half expecting attack and not averse to it, withdrew in good order, and General Meade did not attempt pursuit.

Slowly the Army of Northern Virginia moved southward, without panic, while Lee realized that he must now abandon an offensive campaign and be content with protecting Richmond, the seat of the Confederate government. President Lincoln had called upon the Union states for more men, and the Army of the Potomac was filling up. But the Army of Northern Virginia could not hope for such accessions, as the South had already put all its fighting force into the field. President Davis said, as he sought new men for the Southern army, — older and younger men who had not before been

called to the colors — “It is like robbing the cradle and the grave.”

Lee’s task now was to inspire his troops with courage, even as he had before checked them from tyranny and brutality. In both these efforts he was successful. And we may learn how tenderly he dealt with his fellow-soldiers by this story, authentic and admirable. Colonel Venable, a member of Lee’s staff, one day made a report to his commanding officer about certain difficulties concerning the fording of the Potomac River, just ahead of them. And he made his depressing report in too loud a tone of voice. Lee, it is said, reproved him sharply, for he did not wish the other officers and men to hear it and be discouraged; but, the story continues, he afterward felt regret that he had hurt Colonel Venable’s feelings. So, a short time after, he invited the colonel to drink a friendly glass of buttermilk with him. (This beverage appears to have been a favorite one with General Lee.) The colonel accepted, but his feelings were ruffled, as Lee could perceive. The next day, after they had crossed the Potomac in a drizzling rain, Venable, an excellent officer, being fatigued and being off duty, lay down near a pontoon bridge and slept. When he awoke he found himself protected from the wet by an oil-cloth poncho, — his general’s own coat, taken

from his own shoulders. Thus General Lee apologized; and his aide, who was really devoted to him, could no longer cherish injured feelings.

The retreat of the Confederate forces, if we may call it that, went slowly on, the Union forces not pressing them. Several weeks passed, with Lee on the Rapidan and Meade at Culpeper Court House. The two armies came into contact, from time to time, but there was no general engagement. The summer of 1863 wore away, and both armies went again into winter quarters, only a few miles apart. Meanwhile, the war was going on more actively in other parts of the country. On July 4th, Vicksburg had surrendered to the Federals; on the 8th, Port Hudson also had surrendered; on September 19th was fought the bloody battle of Chickamauga; and on November 24th and 25th occurred the famous battles at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge.

No vital change took place, however, in the relative positions of the two contending armies in Virginia; but there were several encounters, as at Mine Run. Among the anecdotes recounted of General Lee, during this period of "watchful waiting," is one told by the Confederate General Hunt. It reveals Lee's breadth of vision and sympathy. "While at Culpeper, the Confederates were among

friends; General Sedgwick (Federal) was encamped not far away, and some of the families of the neighborhood visited both camps, impartially. One Southern matron, who felt annoyance at this conduct on the part of her young relatives, reproved them, in Lee's presence, appealing to him to support her. The great man's response was wise and kindly. 'Young ladies,' he said, 'I know General Sedgwick well; it is just like him to have his band entertain you; so, if the music is good, go and listen to it, and enjoy yourselves! You will find that General Sedgwick will have none but agreeable gentlemen about him.'"

Throughout the winter Lee realized that, with the opening of spring, when the weather would be milder and the roads passable, vigorous hostilities would be renewed, and he must defend Richmond from the invading Federal Army. This he could foresee; but he could not foresee something which occurred on March 3d, 1864,—the appointment of General Ulysses S. Grant as Lieutenant General of the Union Armies, leaving General Sherman in command of the forces in the West. After a few weeks Lee stationed his depleted, half-starved and half-clothed army in the country just outside of the Confederate capital, and there he awaited the advance of Grant.

In the earlier and more prosperous days of 1862-1863, the Southern soldiers had been furnished with an equipment like this: "Each soldier carried one blanket, one small haversack, one change of underclothing, a canteen, a cup and plate of tin, a knife and fork, and the clothes in which he stood. When marching, the blanket, rolled lengthwise, the ends brought together and strapped, hung from the left shoulder across under the right arm. The haversack — furnished with towel, soap, comb, and knife and fork, in pockets, and underclothing in the main division, with rations in the other division — hung on the left hip. With this 'rig' the Confederate soldier considered himself in 'full dress,' he could get into this in two minutes. In it he marched and fought; like the terrapin, as he facetiously said, 'All he had he carried on his back.'"

But that equipment had been only during the early stages of the war. Gradually the brave fellows discarded portions of their luggage, even as they wore off their flesh tissues. Indeed, when Lee led them in the battles before Richmond, in 1864, they were trained down to bone and sinew; and their physical endurance, like their courage, was well-nigh limitless.

Grant's army before Richmond, reënforced by drafts from the Northern states, was of a much

lower grade ; many of the drafted men fought half-heartedly, while many of the "substitutes" were diseased in body and of low character. If Grant could have commanded an army of the high quality of McClellan's in that same territory, two years before, probably he would have captured Richmond in a few days.

However, in one way and another, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Virginia were less powerful than in 1862, and the war went on doggedly, with much shedding of blood, and the slow wearing away of regiments and divisions of the Confederate troops. Grant, in the battles of this period, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, and Cold Harbor, lost far more men than did Lee ; but his purpose was to hammer, and hammer again, at his foes even though he lost two men to their one in every contest. In the battle of Cold Harbor, the Union soldiers who took the offensive knew that death was certain to come to a large number of them. Before going into action, therefore, many of them pinned slips of paper, bearing their names, upon the backs of their jackets. Precisely the same thing had been done by the Union soldiers at Mine Run a few months before. In both cases the brave men were ready to obey orders, but knew that most of them would lose their lives in doing so.



One of the most famous situations in the whole war was the terrible struggle of the "Bloody Angle," at Spottsylvania. This "angle," or "salient," was, as its name indicates, an abrupt turn in the battle line. An army, when it gives battle, should present its front in as nearly a straight line as possible, thus keeping full face to the enemy; if the line becomes broken or bent it affords a better opening for the enemy's attack on two sides. The famous "Bloody Angle" was a situation of this sort.

At this period of the battle of Spottsylvania Lee, in his anxiety, went forward toward the firing-line instead of remaining at the rear, on some eminence, to direct the contest. But here, as on several similar occasions, his men cried out to him, almost fiercely, to "Get back out of danger!" They even seized Traveler's bridle and dragged him away, so well did they know that Lee was the keystone of the Confederate arch of defense. And he did as they wished, on these occasions. Once, as he reluctantly rode to the rear, he remarked with sad humor, "There seems to be no place whatever for me in this battle."

The Battle of the Wilderness, with the Union forces entangled in swamps, groping their way, lasted two days, — May 5th and 6th, 1864. Then



followed other fierce struggles, by means of which the Confederates were steadily lessened in numbers, under the determined and skillful attacks of General Grant. Through all these days and nights of hardship and gloom General Lee shared, as far as was possible, the exposure and needs of his men. The almost incredible emptiness of his commissariat is disclosed by this incident. A young officer had come out from Richmond to the army, with some information from President Davis; he knew one of the members of Lee's staff, and by him was invited to remain to dinner and he accepted the invitation. The dinner consisted of a large joint of some kind of meat, "garnished" abundantly with "greens." General Lee himself did the sparse and pathetic "honors" of the table. But each of the members of the staff, as he was asked, said he would take some greens but declined the meat. Likewise did the young visitor, being a person of tact. After the meager meal, going apart with his friend, the visitor inquired about the food. "Why did you all eat greens and decline the meat?" he asked.

"I will tell you, honestly," came the explanation. "That meat belonged to Company F. We borrowed it, for to-day, to help the general's feelings, but we promised to return it untouched."

Similar incidents might be recounted, all going to show, directly or indirectly, the unaffected simplicity of the noble son of "Light Horse Harry" Lee, who shared the privations as well as the successes of his men. His intimate friends and fellow-officers knew this, as the North did not at the time; indeed, the North could not, so bitter was the hostility between the two warring sections of the stricken country; later, after the war, ever more and more brightly the star of Robert E. Lee's glory shone through the mists of prejudice, and he came into his own.

One stronghold in Virginia — in addition to Richmond — still held out under the Confederates, the city of Petersburg, thirty-five miles south of Richmond. And General Grant, discouraged by his failures in direct attack upon the Southern soldiers defending Richmond, turned his attention to this important position. During eight months he besieged it; and on April 1st, 1865, after the loss of thousands of brave men, the Federals took the city.

The long winter of 1864-65 brought despair to the Confederacy. The *Alabama* had been sunk by the *Kearsarge*; Sherman had made his victorious but devastating "March to the Sea." The resources of the Confederacy were at a low ebb. The re-

maining fragments of the once proud and powerful Army of Northern Virginia, barefoot and hungry, lived largely upon such primitive food as parched corn, even disputing with their horses the possession of this meager fare. There could be but one end. The great Southern commander saw this end long before his men realized it; and, true to his humane instincts, he now sought to prevent the further useless slaughter of his devoted troops who still obeyed his slightest suggestion. On April 2d, the day following the surrender of Petersburg, Lee retired from Richmond and sought to reach Danville, Virginia, there to join General Joseph E. Johnston; but a strong Union force intercepted him, and he turned toward Lynchburg. Again he was checked, this time by General Philip Sheridan. Then, on April 9th, 1865, although his really famishing and weakened men in their heroism wished otherwise, he decided not to protract their distress. He therefore faced, sadly but frankly, the problem of an honorable capitulation.

## CHAPTER XIX

### APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE

GENERAL Grant also was desirous of ending the war as soon as possible; he knew, as did the leaders of both armies, that a surrender by Lee was the inevitable outcome of the situation. On April 7th, 1865, Grant sent a letter to Lee in which he said that he hoped there would be no further shedding of blood. Thus he tried to pave the way for negotiations concerning a surrender.

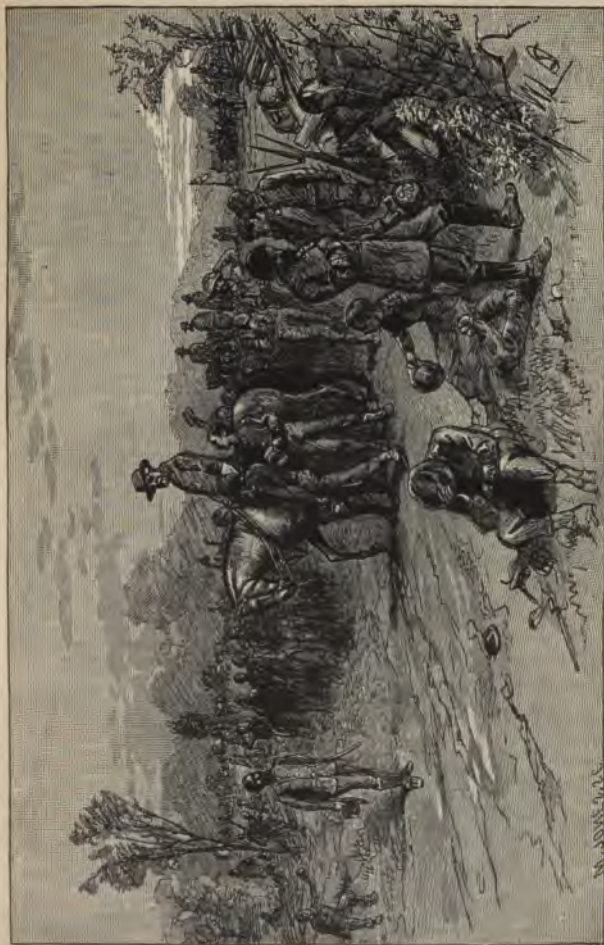
Lee's reply was immediate. He stated that he too wished to avoid any further bloodshed, and asked what terms would be given him and his army. The next day Grant's reply was put into his hands; it read, in part, "There is one only condition upon which I insist; namely, that the men and officers surrendered shall be disqualified for taking up arms again against the United States Government, until properly exchanged."

But General Lee, now that the hard step was indeed before him, shrank from it. His officers advised it, yet he knew that on him rested the

responsibility. Again he wrote to General Grant, saying that he would like to meet him and talk over the terms offered.

To this suggestion General Grant would not accede. This decision was not harsh, on his part. He knew his own mind, — the whole country knew its inflexible nature by this time, — and he realized that the surrender must come on his own terms as already conveyed to General Lee; therefore he declined to meet the Confederate leader, and waited. On April 9th Lee wrote and agreed to meet Grant at once, "in accordance with the offer contained in your letter." Grant promptly replied, and the momentous interview took place immediately after this exchange of messages.

Colonel Babcock, the bearer of General Grant's last note, had found General Lee near Appomattox Court House, resting under an apple tree, upon a blanket spread upon some fence rails. This fact probably started the story that the actual surrender took place at that spot, but it did not; it took place in the house of Mr. Wilmer McLean, not far distant. This place of meeting, a two-story brick structure with a porch, was asked for by one of Lee's orderlies, and the owner readily gave its use. General Lee, with a few officers, reached the house first, and was soon joined by General Grant,



*Courtesy of The Century Co.*

GENERAL LEE'S RETURN TO HIS LINES AFTER THE SURRENDER.

(From a war-time sketch.)

2000



accompanied by Generals Sheridan and Ord. One of the persons present has described the scene:

"Grant sat at a marble-topped table, in the center of the room, Lee at a small oval table near the front window. Grant was not quite forty-three years old, five feet eight inches tall, shoulders slightly stooped, hair and beard nut-brown, wearing a dark-blue flannel blouse, unbuttoned, showing vest beneath; ordinary top-boots, trousers inside; dark-yellow thread gloves; without sword or spurs; and no marks of rank, except a general's shoulder-straps.

"In marked contrast with this sat Lee — now fifty-eight years old — six feet tall, hair and beard silver gray; a handsome uniform of Confederate gray, buttoned up to the throat, with three stars on each side of the turned-down collar, fine top-boots with handsome spurs, elegant gauntlets, and at his side a splendid sword.

"This sword had a white handle, with a lion's head at the top; it was wound with gilt wire, and had a gilt guard, while the scabbard was of blue steel with gilt trimmings. It had been presented to General Lee in 1863." (This sword was given, later, by General Lee to his son, General W. C. Lee.) "With his magnificent physique, ruddy cheeks, and dignified demeanor, General Lee was the focus



of all eyes. His manner indicated that he had a hard duty to perform, and he meant to go through with it, as soon and as well as possible. The two commanders, after exchanging a few reminiscent sentences about the Mexican War, years before, proceeded to the stern details of their interview. At General Lee's request, the terms of the surrender were written out and signed by General Grant."

These terms were, in the main, satisfactory. Only the Confederate chieftain, mindful as always of his faithful soldiers, suggested that he would like to have them allowed — many of them being farmers — to take home their horses for use on their farms. And this request was promptly granted by the Federal leader, who, throughout all the negotiations, before and during the meeting, had evinced a noble and considerate spirit.

After the papers had been signed, Lee mentioned the famished condition of his soldiers, and General Grant arranged to have their needs attended to. There was no dramatic surrender of a sword by Lee at this interview, and a return of the sword to him by Grant. The two great commanders conducted themselves, as always, with entire simplicity, each feeling profound respect for the other's character.

The interview being ended, General Lee rode slowly and sadly away. He had now to endure an experience which was in some ways even harder than the meeting with the Federal commander, for the time had come when he must go out and meet his troops, and tell them the closing act of the great drama. This scene has been tenderly, glowingly, described by General Fitzhugh Lee: "The troops crowded round him. They had seen him when his eye calmly surveyed miles of raging conflict, had closely observed him, tranquil, undisturbed, as he heard the shout of victory rend the air. Now they saw their beloved chieftain a prisoner of war, and boundless sympathy and love for him filled their hearts. They pressed up to him, anxious to touch his person or even his horse, while tears washed from strong men's cheeks the stains of powder. Slowly he turned to his soldiers, and with quavering voice said, 'Men, we have fought through the war together; I have done my best for you. My heart is too full to say more.'

It was an affecting scene.

"No sooner was the first shock of surprise over, among the soldiers of both armies, than they wisely dropped their enmities. They began to fraternize with great speed, almost rejoicing together. The Northern men were eager to relieve

the necessities of their Southern brothers, and the Confederates were appreciative and grateful. One battle-scarred old veteran said to some newly-found friends in blue, 'You uns needn't think you uns have done whipped we uns. We uns have just wore ourselves out a-whipping you uns; and if you uns don't behave yourselves mighty pretty, we uns are going to whip you again.'"

## CHAPTER XX

### LEE'S GREATNESS IN ADVERSITY

WE have seen the nobility of General Lee's character under fire at Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and on other bloody fields. When lesser men would have bent under his burden, he stood firm and strong, and all who wished to do so might lean upon him.

But now had come the hour of admitted defeat, for defeat the world would call it; yet when learning of the stupendous odds against which Lee and his followers struggled, it would award praise to the Army of Northern Virginia in its seeming "defeat" more than to many armies in their victories. We are told that several of the Confederate officers urged their commander to allow them, rather than surrender, to lead their men in an attack on the enveloping Union line, and then, escaping into the mountain region on the West, to continue the warfare indefinitely.

This might have been done, and the Federal government would have had the greatest difficulty

in stamping out the last glowing embers of the Confederacy. But Lee would not encourage the plan; he told those indomitable spirits that only one result could ultimately be reached, and many human lives would be thrown away without any real gain.

His words were heeded; his slightest wish was law to his devoted followers. And so the Army of Northern Virginia dissolved in a mist of golden glory. "Let us now, comrades," Lee said to them, "as we have been one in a struggle for what we believed to be right, accept the decree of arms, and submit and unite in advancing the welfare of all the gracious arts of peace."

This wise and noble attitude of Lee's was not reached by him without storm and stress of soul. We are told that when he came out from that momentous interview with the repressed but generous-minded Union leader, in the McLean homestead, his manner for a moment betrayed the anguish of heart which gripped him, in this, his Gethsemane. "Men who saw the defeated general, as he came forth, say that he paused an instant as his eyes rested on his beloved Virginia hills, and he struck his hands together in an access of inward agony; then mounted his faithful horse, Traveler, and rode away, outwardly calm and self-controlled as ever."

Naturally, Lee turned toward Richmond. His home at Arlington, the Custis estate, had been confiscated early in the war. The "White House," on the Pamunkey River, not far east of Richmond, for a time had been the home of General Lee's family. At this time, however, Mrs. Lee, with some of the family, was living in Richmond. Thither, therefore, rode the great soldier, as great and honored in his defeat as in his days of victory. He might have sent forward notice of his coming; and, had he done so, the whole city would have bowed before him. He hoped to reach his house on Franklin Street unperceived. Simply, quietly, like scores of other Confederate soldiers in the city, Lee rode slowly through the streets. But the citizens recognized him and almost immediately an enthusiastic crowd gathered, among whom were men — so we are told — of the Federal army, all testifying, in every possible way, their admiration for him.

Jefferson Davis had been thrown into a military prison, as had many other Confederates. Feeling in the North was strong against those who had tried to "break down the Union." General Lee's friends — although he had entirely submitted to the new conditions, and had urged all Confederates to do the same — were anxious for his safety. One day two ex-Confederate soldiers called on

him, wearing tattered uniforms, with bodies emaciated from prison confinement; and they told him, in hushed tones, that they were the delegates of "Sixty other fellows, around the corner, too ragged to come themselves." These men offered their beloved commander a farm back in the mountains, safe and comfortable. "We hear that you may be seized and imprisoned; and there is a narrow valley, near this farm of ours, where we could fight off the whole Federal army."

Lee was deeply touched by this unique and sincere expression of devotion, and he thanked the men, although declining the offer. Also, he managed to substitute some better clothing for the "other fellows around the corner." And finally all the men departed, relieved in mind and better clad in body. Many other incidents similar to this happened every week.

For a time General Lee remained in Richmond, but he could not find there the privacy he sought; he was the one person of greatest interest in the city. Many friends and former fellow-soldiers called on him, while curious and thoughtless tourists intruded on his privacy. Accordingly, when a friend offered him and his family the use of a country estate, in (Powhatan County) Lee accepted the kindness, transferring his family thither,

finding the peace and quiet of that retired spot most acceptable. + 10

Alas, his misfortunes were not yet over! His cup of sorrow was not yet full. He had condemned and deplored the recent assassination of President Lincoln on April 14th, 1865, and had applied for the benefits of the "Amnesty Proclamation" which was put forth by Andrew Johnson, formerly Vice President of the Union, now made President by Lincoln's untimely death. This act of Lee's did not meet the approval of many of the bitterest of the Confederates. Still, Lee wished to do everything in his power to bridge the chasm between North and South.

— In June, 1865, he was indicted for treason, in the United States District Court at Norfolk, Virginia. He responded to the summons to court, and in every way conducted himself as a good citizen should. The trial dragged out its futile and ungenerous length, dying, finally, of inanition. General Grant, always magnanimous, protested against such a trial, and doubtless his influence helped to bring it into disrepute. ✓

Robert E. Lee's name was now such a synonym for integrity that several attempts were made to secure it for business enterprises. One concern offered him the presidency of the company and



fifty thousand dollars a year. "I would be of little service," he is said to have replied, "I am quite unfamiliar with the work." To which the directors answered, "You would not be asked to do much; what we wish is your name; it would strengthen our company immensely." Still Lee positively declined. Then there came an offer of a large estate in Europe from some admirers on that side of the ocean, but his answer was that his duty was with his native land. He must now help to restore prosperity and tranquillity to the war-ravaged South.

Next came the invitation to become president of Washington College at Lexington, Virginia. The salary offered was but fifteen hundred dollars, a sum which the trustees felt uncertain of raising, small as it was. They were daring spirits to make such an offer; but General Lee saw, in such work, a field of real usefulness, and he at once accepted. On his veteran war-horse, "Traveler," he rode into the secluded little town, one autumn day in 1865, and, as soon as he was recognized, he was welcomed with transports of joy. <sup>1</sup>

The college was in a state of bankruptcy and general inefficiency. But, little as the new president, in his simplicity and humility of nature realized the fact, his arrival brought the institution



LEE'S HOME AT LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA.



into fame, so that it prospered as never before. This work was to his liking. He said: "I have led the young men of the South to battle; I have seen many of them die upon the field. I shall now devote myself to training young men to do their duty in life." Fitting words are these from one whose whole career had been so heroically shaped by his sense of right and duty.

The new president was held in more than esteem—in admiration, in reverence, by the students. They feared him, in a measure, yet the warmth of his heart showed through his outward dignity and reserve. Even when he made rules which restrained their youthful diversions they trusted his wisdom. Such rules and regulations they liked to call "General Orders," in military parlance.

It was the custom for students who prepared and delivered public orations to indulge, more or less, in thrusts at the "Yankees." But President Lee promptly checked these outbursts, acceptable as they were to many persons in a Southern audience. Throughout the war, as we have seen, he had not allowed himself to "call names"; he had invariably referred to the Federal officers and men as "those people." Always Lee was a gentleman, always did he maintain "inner standards," which are the tests of true gentlemen.

Here are two incidents which show, one his leniency, his kindly indulgence toward youth; the other, his stern, inexorable domination of a trying situation. One winter a certain youth from the far South became fascinated by the ice and skating. He "cut lectures" to indulge himself in what was to him a novel pastime. He was summoned before the president. "You should not have broken the rules," said the president, sternly. "If you wished to go away, you should have asked permission."

"I understand, General," was the lad's humble reply. Then his face brightened as he was about to leave the room; his eyes twinkled and he dared to say, "The ice is fine, to-day, General."

"Yes?"

"I'd like very much to be excused and go skating." The wish was granted.

The other incident was this. Among the students were many young men who had been in service upon the battle-field. They were strong-willed and inclined to overstep restraints. Before President Lee's advent at the college there had been the custom of allowing a week's holiday at Christmas time. But, for good reasons, the new president decided that Christmas Day alone should be given as a holiday. At once there was a revolt.

A petition was set in circulation which pledged the signers to absent themselves from lectures throughout the entire Christmas week. There were many names already signed; the insubordination boded ill for the college authorities. How would the new president meet the situation?

He met it. He announced, tersely, that any man whose name appeared on such a declaration would be expelled; and if every student in the college signed, he would send them all home, lock up the college, and put the key in his pocket.

That settled the rebellion. The victor of Chancellorsville was not to be disobeyed; he who had been as a tower of adamant to millions of men and women through nearly four tumultuous years was not to be lightly opposed, and the declaration was quietly withdrawn.

Thomas Nelson Page — whose admiration of Lee, great as it is, is no greater than the present writer's — has given us this interesting reminiscence. He was a student at Washington College under President Lee. "I was so unfortunate, while at college, as to have, always, an early class. So, from time to time, on winter mornings, it was my habit 'to run late,' as the phrase went. This brought me in danger of meeting the president on his way from chapel. One morning I came face

to face with him. He greeted me courteously, and I touched my cap nervously as I hastened by. The next moment I heard him speak my name. I removed my cap and turned toward him. 'Yes, sir?' I stammered, ill at ease.

"' Tell Miss X—— (mentioning the house-mistress with whom I boarded) that I would like her to prepare your breakfast for you a little earlier, if she can, please! '"

That was all the reprimand the student received, yet it was effective. As in war days Lee was often most ingenious in admonishing his subordinates. A visitor at the college one day inquired after a student in whom he was interested, "Is he doing good work?"

The boy was not doing good work, as the president knew, for he kept in touch with practically every young man under his charge. But Lee hardly liked to say so in so many words. Instead, he smiled and made this reply: "He is a quiet, orderly fellow, but seems very careful not to injure the health of his father's son." That told the whole story, but not harshly.

President Lee continued his outdoor exercise as much as possible. He rode regularly, on Traveler, among the roads and byways of the Lexington region. Often he was escorted by some of the

children of his professors. His touch with childhood was always sensitive and winning, and children quickly trusted him, and loved to be with him. A granddaughter of Governor Letcher, for whom General Lee had stood as godfather, was named Virginia Lee Letcher; she had a still younger sister, Fannie, who "tagged after her," as younger brothers and sisters always have done. One day while riding President Lee came upon Virginia, sitting by the roadside, very angry with Fannie, who stood near her. Virginia at once appealed to him. "Won't you please send Fannie home? Won't you please make her go home to her mother?"

The story continues that Lee, vastly amused at this childlike appeal, drew the persistent Fannie up to his saddle, where she sat in great content, and so he carried her home. When Mrs. Letcher afterward asked Virginia why she had appealed to General Lee, the child replied, "I couldn't make Fannie go, and I thought that he could do anything." That was the feeling which thousands of brave Confederates had maintained for four years. Indeed, the great military chieftain often had appeared to achieve the impossible.

One of his biographers — and Lee has had many — relates this beautiful incident of his Lexington



life. "One day I saw the general standing near his gate, talking with a stranger to whom he gave some money as the two men parted. I drew near, venturing to ask who the man was. Lee replied, 'He was one of our old soldiers.' Much interested, I inquired further, 'And to what command did he belong?' My dear friend and former commanding officer replied, 'Oh, he was one of those that fought against us; but we are all one, now; and we must make no difference in our treatment of the two kinds.' "

It was in this tolerant, kindly spirit that Robert E. Lee lived out the remainder of his days after the fortunes of war had gone against the South.

## CHAPTER XXI

### "TAPS"

THE hardships which General Lee had endured throughout his severe and protracted campaigns finally exhausted the great stores of vitality which had been his in youth and early manhood. He was induced by friends to try seasons of recuperation at health resorts, but he gained little from these few vacations; he relied, more than on anything else, for such partial recovery as he might make, upon his regularity of life, in which daily rides upon his faithful "Traveler" formed an enjoyable part.

On some of these excursions pleasant incidents occurred which must have helped Lee, modest, unassuming hero that he was, to realize how deeply esteem and love for him were rooted in the hearts of the plain people. On one trip, in company with his daughter Mildred, he came to a ferry; they were about twenty miles from Lexington. The ferryman proved, on inquiry, to be a veteran of the Army of Northern Virginia. When the usual pay-

ment for his services was offered him, the rough mountaineer's eyes filled with tears and he declined the money. "I couldn't take pay from you, Master Robert," he said, "I have followed you in many a battle."

On another occasion, when father and daughter were riding together, a shower came up, and the two were obliged to seek shelter in a log cabin near the highway. The elderly woman within did not at first receive her wet guests with much cordiality. Her floors were scrupulously clean, and every footprint left its mark. On the wall hung rudely colored portraits of Lee, Jackson, and Jefferson Davis. When the storm had somewhat abated, General Lee went out to bring up the horses. In his absence his daughter ventured to point out to their unwilling hostess that it was the original of one of those portraits who had been driven to seek shelter within her house. At once the poor woman stood astonished and almost inarticulate with joy. "Lord bless my soul!" she cried. "To think of it! That I should have had General Lee in my house!"

When the great Southern leader had first reached Lexington it seemed as if the admiration of his new neighbors and fellow-townsmen was as high as it could possibly be, humanly speaking; yet, as the months and the few years passed, that feeling

deepened into a veneration for the white-haired chieftain which was almost a religion. They had all read of him and heard of him, how nobly he had carried himself amid the roar of battle; and now, in the quiet of their peaceful academic seclusion, he came and went among them with the utmost simplicity, as if he knew not that he was among the most illustrious of living men. Comparisons have been made, frequently, between Lee and Grant, and other great warriors of history, but without very satisfying results. One can only wish that Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee might have met, and talked, and sounded each other's mind and heart; certainly they would have understood each other, and probably the differences in their early training would have made them intensely interesting to each other. There was the same simplicity and magnanimity in both which would have made them close friends; Lee the finer spirit by cultivation, and Lincoln the broader in grasp of intellect, and in range of sympathies.

Upon each rested enormous responsibility, and each in silence bore his burden alone, — Lee because of the personal reserve which a commander in the field must maintain, Lincoln because none was great enough to understand him and sympathize with him. Like two stars, in orbits which held

them far apart, they obeyed, each as each knew it, the will of Him who made the stars, and made human souls that shine with a stellar light.

The end of all things earthly came to our illustrious hero on the 12th of October, 1870, when he was nearly sixty-four years old. In a moment he was struck down, physically helpless, and lingered but a few days, at times murmuring orders to one of his trusted lieutenants, the gallant A. P. Hill, as if again on the field of battle. Then came the Great Silence; for the Inexorable Trumpeter; Death, had sounded "Taps," and "All lights must be out."

Robert E. Lee has left an enduring memory of the high idealism of a human soul. The world has come to see the truer proportions of human values among races, — at least in theory, if not always in practice, — as it was not given to most men of the South to see them in the middle of the nineteenth century. But the world rarely, if ever, in its long recorded history, has produced a finer and more exalted manhood than was embodied in Lee.

He was buried in Lexington, Virginia; and all that was said in funeral orations and eulogies, however unheeded by the North at that time, has become more and more acceptable in all quarters of

our land. Senator Hill, of Georgia, said of Lee, "He was Cæsar without his ambition, Frederick without his tyranny, Napoleon without his selfishness, and Washington without his reward."

Sometimes we wonder, as we consider famous men, what this man or that might have been, under different circumstances; as in Gray's "Elegy," we fall into conjecture about the "village Hampdens," "the inglorious Miltons," and the "guiltless Cromwells." But that obverse side of each human shield is hidden and unknown — even our own. In the case of Robert E. Lee, we have seen him tested in war and in peace, in adversity and in prosperity, under the exaltation of victory, and amid the commonplace duties of a daily routine. And everywhere and always he met the experiences that came to him with so poised and perfect a spirit that all who beheld him marveled at him. When Socrates said that "No harm could come to a good man," it was of a man like Robert E. Lee that he spoke. Lee met discouragement and defeat with patience and fortitude; he met success and victory with self-restraint and dignity; he passed through sunshine and through shadow as one whose soul was lighted by an inner glory which paled the flickering lights of earth.

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